Paternalists, Populists and Pilkington: The struggle for the soul of British television, 1958 - 1963

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Abstract

This thesis examines crucial decisions made about British broadcasting in the five years after 1958, when television first reached five million homes in Britain, and when, it was believed, working-class people had become a majority of the audience. The Pilkington Committee on the Future of Broadcasting was commissioned after some years' uncertainty by a Conservative Government in 1960, allowing it to postpone determining its own policy. The Committee published its Report in 1962, recommending a second television channel for the BBC but not for ITV. The following year, there followed a paternalist and restrictive Television Act. The BBC's dominance in British broadcasting was, as a result, assured for several decades, and commercial television, which had made controversially large profits by exploiting the public taste for undemanding entertainment, was brought under the control of a strengthened Independent Television Authority, emerging from it only in the 1990s. But, at a time when, it was thought, social change meant the end of deference, British television, in which the paternalist tradition was ubiquitous, remained an area where deference was actually enforced. Viewers were expected, much of the time on all available channels, to accept the primacy of the taste of the educated middle-class.

Although the Pilkington Committee's recommendation for restructuring ITV was rejected, its Report was nonetheless instrumental in confirming a long-lasting paternalist bias in the system. The thesis analyses the Committee's approach, and argues that its importance should be recognised.

Why, it is also asked, did a Conservative Government acquiesce in establishing a pattern of broadcasting contrary to the principles of free enterprise and competition in which it professed to believe? The answer is found in the ambivalence about social change which characterised Conservatism until the Thatcherite victory of the 1980s, and in the puritanical anti-commercialism of the Left.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

This work is dedicated to Tobias, Jacob, Sophie, Annabel, Gabriel, and Susan.
None of them know how much each has helped. Where they have led, I have followed, as best I could.

I should like to express my deepest thanks to my adviser, Professor Rodney Lowe, without whose wisdom, insight, knowledge and good humour, this work would have been infinitely inferior, had it ever been finished. I would also like to record a debt of gratitude to my good friend Dr. Lawrence Black for his wise, pertinent, and always helpful advice, and to Dr. Sian Lewis, without whose inspiration and encouragement I should never have started.

A special debt of gratitude is owed to two members of Sir Harry Pilkington's family. Mrs. Jennifer Jones, his daughter, was particularly generous with her time, and very kindly granted me access to her father's diaries, which were in the keeping of Mr. David Pilkington, his nephew, who not only allowed me to borrow the diaries, but provided many fascinating stories about Sir Harry, for most of which I have been unable to find space. The warmth of their reception, and the kindness with which I was greeted, have left an indelible impression.

I should also like to express my appreciation of the insight into the Pilkington Committee's operations I was fortunate enough to be given in two interviews with Betty Whitley, who very hospitably received me at her remote cottage in Galloway. With infinite patience, she recalled detailed impressions of the Committee at work forty years previously, and provided thoughtful and acute accounts of the individuals who served on it.

Finally, Dennis Lawrence, O.B.E., has been the kind of personal source whom few writers can hope to be lucky enough to find. Offering the warmest of greetings, over a series of meetings he spared himself no effort in attempting to ensure that my mistakes of fact and of comprehension were as few as possible. Although, as readers may discover, I find myself obliged to make some criticisms of what may be described as his Report, my respect for him as its principle author knows no bounds. All those who worked in television in the last four decades of the twentieth century owe him a huge debt in respect of his contribution to the medium. My personal debt, in particular, is incalculable. It is a privilege to possess his personal copy of the published Report, which he very kindly gave me. The mistakes that remain in the work that follows are, of course, my responsibility alone.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original, except where indicated by special reference in the text, and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other academic award. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED.....

DATE..... 28.02.05

Contents

'I have absolutely no doubt that television as a whole has been a great invention and a great success. Very many millions of people have had their horizons broadened and their experiences enlarged, very many millions of people get a great deal of perfectly legitimate and innocent entertainment. To suggest, by omission, that this is not so would give all the ammunition possible to those that will want to make us appear as kill-joys, Third Programme enthusiasts, and defenders only of minority interests'

Sir Harry Pilkington, Chairman of the Pilkington Committee on the Future of Broadcasting, in a letter to Dennis Lawrence, the Committee's Secretary, February 6, 1962.[1]

'Triviality is more dangerous to the soul than wickedness'.

R.H. Tawney, addressing the Workers' Educational Association, quoted in the Association's written submission to the Pilkington Committee [2], and in the Committee's Report [3].

[1] The National Archives (hereinafter NA): HO 244/265.
[2] Report of the Committee on Broadcasting, 1960, Vol. II, Appendix E, Papers submitted to the Committee, Cmnd. 1819 - 1 (London: HMSO, 1962) Paper no. 146, p.847.
[3] Report of the Committee on Broadcasting, 1960, Cmnd. 1753 (London: HMSO, 1962), p.35.

Chapter One: **Paternalists versus Populists**

(i): **Introduction**

Between 1958 and 1963, major decisions were made about the role television played, and was to play, in British life. This study is concerned with the importance of those decisions, both for the effect they were to have on the medium itself, and for the light they cast on contemporary British history. The centrepiece is the Pilkington Report on the Future of Broadcasting, commissioned in 1960 and published in 1962.

Its significant recommendations were, in regard to the BBC, that 'it should remain the main instrument of broadcasting in the United Kingdom'. [1] At Royal and State occasions, when only one camera team could be present, the BBC should provide it. It should continue to be financed out of licence revenue, and only out of licence revenue. It should be allocated a new additional television channel, as soon as possible. To pay for that, and for colour, and for new local radio services, the licence fee should be increased. Its Charter should be renewed from 1964, for a further twelve years.

The Report's criticism of independent television was ferocious. Radical reorganization was necessary. The Independent Television Authority, which was blamed for its failure to control the ITV companies, was to be much strengthened. It would plan all programming and sell all advertising time. The programme companies would still make the programmes, but under the ITA's direction, and sell them to the ITA at prices enabling a surplus to go to the Exchequer. Advertising was to be more strictly controlled than it had so far been. There would be no second ITV channel until its structure had been reformed, and proved satisfactory. There should be no subscription television, and no television for public showing. There should be no commercial local radio.

As will be seen, the recommendations for the BBC were accepted, although it was 1965 before the licence fee was increased. The detailed plans for the reorganization of ITV were rejected, though the power of the Authority was increased. Experiments in subscription television were

[1] The Report was published as the Report of the Committee on Broadcasting, Cmnd.1753 (London:HMSO, 1962). Its summary of recommendations is on pp. 287-296 of the Report. Summaries published in popular newspapers on June 28, 1962, are reprinted in Appendix F.

encouraged, but subscribers were few until the arrival of new systems of distribution in the 1990s. Commercial local radio was not allowed until 1972. What mattered above all to the government, and to viewers, was the television service received through the aerial on the roof. It is that on which this study will concentrate.

By 1958 commercial television had spread throughout the United Kingdom, reaching five million homes for the first time. That year also for the first time there were more combined radio and television licences issued than radio licences alone.[2] Television was on the point of genuinely becoming a mass medium. In that year also, the Conservative Government was forced to confront the political problems caused by the medium's increasing penetration into all areas of British life. The experience of ITV since it had gone on the air in 1955 had sharpened differences within the Conservative Party. There were those who wanted to ensure that the BBC could continue to guarantee a service to the nation as a whole, unaffected by the values of the market-place. Others insisted that, whether or not the BBC survived in its traditional form, the television industry should be competitive, consumer-led and market-driven. In 1960, without a policy of its own, the Government set up the Committee under Sir Harry Pilkington.

By 1963, a settlement had been achieved, not entirely by design, which would endure for decades. The BBC would remain the country's dominant broadcaster, with two channels, while ITV was limited to its one channel, under strict control, and forced to mimic the BBC in much of its programming. In 1982 it would be joined by Channel Four, whose public service remit was carefully delineated, even though its income came from advertising sold, initially, by the ITV companies. In 1985 the critic Christopher Dunkley described the system as a 'benevolent duopoly', claiming that 'the excellence of British programmes [was] unmatched anywhere in the world'.[3] Others, on the right and the left, called the duopoly 'cosy', and campaigned for it to be cracked open.[4] Overlapping with them were commercial interests who were waiting more or less patiently for the day when, in a metaphor used by Harold Macmillan [5], Toby Belch would

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[2] Asa Briggs, *The History of British Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, vol. 5: Competition* (Oxford: OUP, 1995), p. 30.
[3] Christopher Dunkley, *Television Today and Tomorrow,* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 83.
[4] By 1986, the Peacock Committee was calling it a 'comfortable' duopoly, which was already under threat from 'alternative sources of supply', such as video-cassettes, satellite and cable. It described two characteristic features of duopolists: they have less incentive to be cost-conscious than where there is more competition, and 'they direct a good deal of their effort to enhancing their reputation with fellow-professionals'. (Cmnd. 9824, *The Peacock Report* (London: HMSO, 1986), para.197).
[5] See Chapter II below.

overcome Malvolio, and *Double Your Money* - absent from British screens since 1968 - could return in the guise of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*

Until 1970, the Independent Television Authority, was led by its Director-General, Sir Robert Fraser, an Australian and a former journalist. According to Anthony Sampson, Fraser regarded himself 'as a 'liberal' with a small 'l'... a Benthamite, believing in democratic choice, in contrast to the Platonic ideals of the BBC' [6]. He liked to think of himself as a populist, and of commercial television as 'people's television'. Bernard Sendall, his deputy, later wrote that Fraser 'believed passionately in the judgement and good sense of ordinary people' [7]. Sampson quotes a speech Fraser made in 1960:

> If you decide to have a system of people's television, then people's television you must expect it to be, and it will reflect their likes and dislikes, their tastes and aversions, what they can comprehend, and what is beyond them.[8]

For all Fraser's readiness to distinguish between 'you' - whoever that was - and 'people' - whoever they were - his successor in 1970 was to demonstrate very different attitudes. The man appointed was Brian Young, then Director of the charitable Nuffield Foundation, and a former Headmaster of Charterhouse.[9]

By 1970, the ITA saw itself as much part of the paternalist tradition in British broadcasting as the BBC, and the appointment was a sign of how times had changed. 'The paternal tradition in British broadcasting' was actually the title that Young chose for a lecture he gave to a university audience within months of his retirement in 1983. He spoke then of the 'commanding paternal role' played by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (as it had been renamed), a role which was strengthened, he said, after it had been thought to be 'too indulgent with its children'. The context suggests that by 'children' Young meant the ITV companies, but he might well have been understood to mean the British people as a whole. Indeed, he said, he was happy to use the word

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[6] Fraser had studied at the LSE, where he had been a protégé of Harold Laski, worked on the pre-war *Daily Herald*, and had gone from the wartime Ministry of Information to run the peacetime Central Office of Information. He was knighted in 1959.

[7] Bernard Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain: Vol. I, Origin and Foundation* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p.136.

[8] Anthony Sampson, *The Anatomy of Britain* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1962), p.610.

[9] Young had been educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge, winning first-class honours in both halves of the classical tripos. He had taught at Eton before going to Charterhouse as its Head at the age of 29. He was well over six feet tall, and almost all ITV executives had, physically, to look up to him. He was knighted in 1976.

'paternal': in broadcasting, and in television in particular, the state should act like 'a wise father'. The companies 'appointed and controlled' by the state-appointed Authority:

> would bring to the product some of the drive which private enterprise has to have in its relationship to the consumer, but with better instincts and higher aspirations ... fostered and encouraged by the public body.[10]

In the early 1950s, many on both right and left had vehemently argued that those better instincts and higher aspirations would be altogether excluded from the operations of commercial television. By 1958, they could argue that they had been proved right. ITV had become hugely popular precisely by showing the kinds of programmes which offended its critics. [11]

The 1954 Act which established it had, as a sop to its opponents, provided only for it to stay in existence for an experimental period of ten years. The period of the late 1950s was therefore a critical moment in broadcasting history. New legislation was needed to keep ITV on the air after 1964. There was the prospect of extra frequencies becoming available for a third, and possibly a fourth, channel. Should any new services be financed by advertising? Or should the BBC be given the second television channel it was asking for, despite the small share of the audience it was currently winning (and the prospect of an even smaller one for any new channel), with the consequent need for a politically-difficult increase in the licence fee? [12] It was now that the pattern was to be set for decades to come for the role that broadcasting, and particularly television, was to play in British life. The alternatives seemed stark: on the one hand, something resembling the American system in which competitive capitalist enterprises dominated, claiming to respond to consumer choice, with the BBC inevitably declining into relative insignificance,

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[10] Sir Brian Young, *The Paternal Tradition in British Broadcasting 1922-?* (Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University, 1983), p.2.

[11] Television Audience Measurement reported in December 1957 that of 539 programmes listed in its Top Ten since ITV had started, in London 536 were from ITV and three from the BBC; in the Midlands, ITV had 554 out of 556, and in the North, 542 out of 544. Peter Black, *The Mirror in the Corner* (London: Hutchinson, 1972), p.109.

[12] In 1957, the government added £1 excise duty (which did not go to the BBC) to the £3 combined licence fee which had been set in 1954. In its submission to Pilkington, the BBC argued that it could start a second television channel only if it received the full £4 (less Post Office collection charges), and that it would need the full proceeds of a £5 licence fee to operate a colour service and local radio. The combined fee was only raised to £5 in 1965 by the Labour Government, when the BBC was asking for £6. In the interim, the BBC's finances had been secured by the increase in the number of combined licences sold annually. See Cmnd. 1819, submission from the BBC, pp.111, and 193, and Briggs 1995, pp.286, 307, & 502.

and, on the other, a system in which the BBC, protected by its licence fee, could operate to some extent independently of market forces, and remain 'the main instrument of broadcasting'.[13]

In 1960 the government appointed its Committee to examine the issue, and, the evidence suggests, to delay any decisions for as long as possible. The Pilkington Committee began, naturally enough, by looking at the recent performance of the broadcasting organizations. Its report, published in 1962, excoriated ITV to an extent that dismayed many in the party that had been responsible for bringing it into existence. But the Report was uncompromising in its criticism:

> [ITV's] concept of balance does not satisfy the varied and many-sided tastes and interests of the public. In the field of entertainment - and not least in light entertainment - there is much that lacks quality ... much on television is trivial ... the service falls well short of what a good public service of broadcasting should be.[14]

The ITA itself was magisterially rebuked for its failure to enforce the 'high quality' of programmes stipulated in the 1954 Act, and was instructed that 'quality' could not 'properly' be equated with 'box-office success'. Major structural changes in ITV were necessary.

A new Television Act eventually emerged in 1963 after fierce arguments with its opponents. They included the embattled ITA, still under Robert Fraser, and many of the government's supporters, much of the press, the whole of the advertising industry, and a vocal part of the television industry. But the Government had been as determined as Pilkington to bring about the significant strengthening of the Authority of which Young was to speak proudly decades later. Accepting many of the Report's arguments, the Act laid down, for the first time, that ITV should disseminate 'information, education and entertainment' in that order, as in the wording of the BBC Charter. The popular hunger for entertainment that had driven the medium's growth, and to which ITV had responded, was effectively ignored. The Authority, though not granted the power to commission programmes directly, as Pilkington had suggested, was nonetheless given far greater powers to ensure that output should be 'of a high general standard' and 'properly balanced in subject matter', with it holding final responsibility for the entire programme schedule.[15]

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[13] The phrase comes from the Conservative Government's *Memorandum on Television Policy,* Cmnd. 9005 (London: HMSO, 1953).
[14] Report of the Committee on Broadcasting, Cmnd.1753 (London:HMSO, 1962), pp.65 and 67.
[15] Bernard Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain, Vol. 2, Expansion and Change, 1958-68* (London: Macmillan 1983), p. 166.

In a direct echo of the Pilkington Report, and in a classic statement of the paternalist ideal, Young declared in his 1983 lecture:

> Television is essentially different from books and papers and films, from shirts and toys and watches, in that it gives of its best to most people if it is not market-dominated. I believe that has been shown to be absolutely true, and needs to be shouted from the housetops.[16]

By 1965, looking back at its first full year under the new Act, the ITA's annual handbook made clear where its priorities lay. After *'News'* at the front of the book came sections on *'Documentaries'* followed by *'The Arts', 'Religion', 'Schools Programmes', 'Adult Education'* and *'Drama'*. Only then did *'Light Entertainment'* appear, narrowly edging in front of *'Sport'* and programmes in Welsh. The handbook seemed pleased to be able to note a trend 'towards a decline in the total number of quiz programmes', though the two of them that were most popular, *Double Your Money* and *Take Your Pick*, continued, it said, 'to be enjoyed by vast audiences'.[17] In 1968, despite vast audiences still, both were taken off the air.

The ITA's official history points out that, by then, after new franchises had been granted, it was insisting on a minimum of two hours of factual programming other than news, in peak-time, every night.[18] The companies were compelled to transmit two current affairs programmes a week in peak hours, as well as one 'main' weekday drama and one documentary per week, and, for most of the year, a weekend 'special' on the arts or sciences. At Christmas 1972, the ITA insisted that a Glyndebourne production of Verdi's Macbeth be screened 'at a good viewing time'.[19] For decades, there were periods in peak-time when viewers could only choose between current affairs on BBC1 and ITV.

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[16] Young, *Paternal Tradition*, pp.7-8.
[17] *ITV 1965 - A Guide to Independent Television* (London: ITA, 1965), p.95.
[18] Peak-time was defined as 6.30pm (7.15pm on Sundays) till 10.30pm.
[19] Jeremy Potter, *Independent Television in Britain, vol. 4, Companies and Programmes, 1968-1980* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 12/13.

(ii): **Pilkington and historians**

Despite the apparent triumph of its ideas, the Pilkington Report, when it has been noticed at all, has not had sympathetic treatment from most historians of television. Andrew Crisell in his *Introductory History of British Broadcasting* has called it 'politically, a dinosaur'. 'No government of any colour', he writes, 'would attempt radical reforms to a service as popular as ITV', least of all a Conservative government 'with its faith in commercial enterprise'. Though, in apparent self-contradiction, he adds that 'by insisting on the public service responsibilities of ITV', the Report strengthened 'the non-competitive aspects of...British television', and, as a result, ITV's programming over the next two decades became more like the BBC's'.[20] A dinosaur of some power and influence, then.

In a twice-anthologised 1990 article on 'Public service broadcasting: the history of a concept' Paddy Scannell summarises the Report's conclusions, but he neither analyses it in any detail nor gives any account of its influence. He allows it only two paragraphs, makes no mention of the 1963 Act, and skips directly from 1962 to 1977, the year of the Annan Report.[21] He equally fails to point out that Pilkington's proposals for the ITA were a clear influence on Annan's recommendation for an Open Broadcasting Authority (Channel Four, as it was to become), which would specifically cater for minority interests, with responsibilities for selling advertising institutionally separated from those for programme-making. Scannell clearly is attacking the means rather than the end. He is concerned to defend the concept of public service broadcasting, while disassociating himself from the likes of Pilkington. The development of the concept in Britain, he wrote:

> has undoubtedly been coloured by the patrician values of a middle-class intelligentsia. [Now] a defence of public service broadcasting in terms of quality and standards tied to prescriptive and élitist conceptions of education and culture is no longer feasible.[22]

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[20] Andrew Crisell, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp.112/113.
[21] Paddy Scannell, 'Public service broadcasting: the history of a concept' in *Understanding Television*, eds. Andrew Goodwin and Garry Whannel (London: Routledge, 1990), p.18. This article is reproduced in *British Television: A Reader*, ed. Edward Buscombe (Oxford: OUP, 2000), pp. 45-62. See also the Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting (the Annan Report) Cmnd. 6753, (London: HMSO, 1977).
[22] Scannell, 'Public service broadcasting', p.26.

But Scannell did also point out, in a passage reflecting Pilkingtonian ideas, that the establishment of Channel Four represented 'a continuing political commitment to regulating broadcasting as a public good and in the public interest':

> The pursuit of these aims has to date been underpinned by a disregard for commercial considerations as either the only or the primary objective of the broadcasting services... rooted in the political will to maintain, against the grain of economic considerations, a commitment to properly public, social values and concerns.

As Scannell was writing, he feared that 'the hard-won 'public sphere' created over the last thirty years [might] shatter into splinters under the impact of de-regulated multi-channel video services'.[23] His prediction seems to have been accurate, but even in 1999 John Corner could still write that, in Britain, 'the rather hybridic' (and, we might add, Pilkingtonian) model of grafting public service and commercial interests together 'was in obvious decline' [24], rather than dead.

Some years earlier, in a brief account of the Pilkington Report, Corner had written that, despite the longevity of its influence (he referred to its 'strength of humanistic social vision'), it allowed its critics far too easily to reduce its conclusions to 'explicit paternalism'. Pilkington was for Corner in many respects 'a misguided project', partly insofar as its most radical suggestions were unlikely to be accepted. Nonetheless:

> Though little legislation followed *directly* (emphasis in original) from its submission, the Report, together with the responses to it, nevertheless marked an important moment in the history of post-war national culture, revealing stress lines, fracture points and also convergences, with more than usual clarity and detail.[25]

The 1963 Act *did* follow directly from the Report, of course, as did the establishment of BBC2. Equally, as has already been noted, its influence can be seen many years later in the legislation establishing Channel Four. A more recent writer, Victoria Wegg-Prosser, has declared that it assured 'the great and good' of their continuing influence 'over what television should contain'.[26] Peter Goodwin has also pointed out recently that Pilkington 'transformed the face of ITV':

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[23] Ibid, pp. 25/26.
[24] John Corner, *Critical Ideas in Television Studies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).
[25] John Corner, 'Introduction: television and British society in the 1950s' in *Popular Television in Britain,* ed. J. Corner (London: BFI, 1991), p.10.
[26] Victoria Wegg-Prosser, '*This Week* in 1956: the introduction of Curent Affairs on ITV' in Janet Thumim, ed., *Small Screens, Big Ideas: Television in the 1950s* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p. 205.

'although...its formal recommendations on the structure of ITV were not taken up, their substance was'.[27]

Asa Briggs's chapter on Pilkington in Volume V of his massive history of British broadcasting[28] covers much of the ground, but leaves unexplored many questions about, for example, the composition of the Committee and the process by which it reached its conclusions. Nor is the political and social background to the Report dealt with. A short section on its aftermath leaves the question of the Report's influence on the 1963 Act wholly uninvestigated. Briggs writes in his preface that his work was 'based primarily on a thorough examination of ... BBC archives', and that, unlike in earlier, more comprehensive volumes, he is no longer telling 'the whole story', but is writing mainly 'from a BBC vantage-point'. [29] For ITV, he directs the reader to the histories of the ITA (later the IBA) by Bernard Sendall and Jeremy Potter. [30] These are extremely valuable sources, but clearly suffer in some respects from being the work of 'official' historians, such as Briggs is quick to remind us that he is not. [31] Sendall was directly involved in many of the events he describes, although he occasionally neglects to mention his own part in them. Potter was Managing Director of ITV Publications, and an ITV Company Director. Their work is necessarily coloured by the 'vantage-points' from which they write.

Michael Tracey's gloomy survey in 1998 of 'The Decline and Fall of Public Service Broadcasting', which, in the British context, is mostly concerned with the BBC, recognised that 'the high-water mark of public and official acclaim for the notion of public service broadcasting as understood by the BBC was the Report of the Pilkington Committee'. [32] Sadly, this is vitiated by his mistaken attribution of perhaps the most ambitious claim the Report makes about the powers and purpose of broadcasting. 'By its nature', the Report declared, 'broadcasting must be in a constant and sensitive relationship with the moral condition of society'. Broadcasters, it insisted, 'are, and must be, involved; this gives them a responsibility they cannot evade'. [33] Tracey has

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[27] Peter Goodwin, *Television under the Tories: Broadcasting Policy 1979-1997* (London: BFI, 1998), p.13, quoting the Annan Report, Cmnd. 6753, p.146.
[28] Briggs *History*, Vol. 5, pp.257/308.
[29] Briggs, *History Vol. 5*, p.xv.
[30] Bernard Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain, Vol.I: Origin and Foundation, 1946-1962* (London: Macmillan,1982) and *Vol. II, Expansion and Change,* (London: Macmillan, 1983); Jeremy Potter, *Independent Television in Britain, Vol. III: Politics and Control, 1968-1980* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989) & *Vol. IV,* 1990.
[31] Briggs, History, Vol. 5. p.xvi.
[32] Michael Tracey, *The Decline and Fall of Public Service Broadcasting* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), p.21.
[33] Cmnd. 1753, p.15

twice, in separate publications, misattributed these remarks to a pamphlet published privately in 1963, the year *after* Pilkington, by Sir Arthur fforde, then Chairman of the BBC.[34]

But if historians of broadcasting have only provided limited and often misinformed coverage, so have many political historians. Mid-century politicians were concerned about television, even if they rarely watched it. In 1959, when, as John Ramsden points out, for the first time half the electorate had access to a set, it became 'a favoured explanation for political trends'. [35] As we shall see later, broadcasting policy was hotly debated in the Conservative Party in the run-up to the 1959 election, and subsequently. For example, Oliver Poole, then the Deputy Party Chairman, went so far as to declare during the drafting of the 1959 manifesto that 'commercial television [was] by far the most popular and important thing we have done', and argued that taking credit for it should figure prominently in the campaign. [36] But Ramsden's otherwise exhaustive history of the Conservative Party makes no direct reference to the debates within the Party on broadcasting policy. Neither Pilkington nor the 1963 Act figure all. [37]

Mark Jarvis has recently provided a thoughtful chapter on broadcasting in his work on Conservativism and affluence. However, his eagerness to prove that the Tory Government before 1964 was 'far from being [a] stalwart of traditionalism' and was 'advocating freedom of choice over what was to be watched on the small screen' has led him, as will be shown later, to be selective in his choice of evidence, and, crucially, to overlook the restrictive nature of the 1963 Act. [38]

Richard Weight has recently called the Report 'a minor but significant point in the history of British national identity' (though, regrettably, his account of the Committee's composition is

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[34] Tracey, *Decline and Fall*, p.19, and *An Essay on Television: Part Two, Britannia* (Boulder: University of Colorado, 2003), p.15.
[35] John Ramsden, *The Winds of Change: Macmillan to Heath, 1957-1975* (London: Longman, 1996), p.62.
[36] Meeting of Conservative Steering Committee, June 26, 1959, The Bodleian Library, Oxford, Conservative Party Archive, papers of the Conservative Research Department (hereafter CPA CRD), 2/53/34. In the end ITV was not mentioned at all in the manifesto. See below, p.42.
[37] In the whole of his period, in regard to broadcasting Ramsden notes just one Party complaint in late 1970 about political bias at the BBC. See chapter II below for a discussion of pro- and anti-BBC feelings in the Conservative Party. Ramsden also tells the story of Macmillan's rejection of the suggestion from Reginald Bevins that he should get the BBC to tone down attacks on him on *That Was the Week That Was* with the 'laconic' minute: 'Oh no you won't'. Ramsden believes that Macmillan in fact underestimated the effect of such attacks. Ramsden, 1996, pp.144 and 321.
[38] Mark Jarvis, *Conservative Governments in Affluent Britain, 1957-64* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.148 . I am grateful to Dr. Jarvis for allowing me to see an advance copy of the chapter on broadcasting.

inaccurate) [39], but it is surely a compelling instance of his argument that 'the development of a common culture based on high aesthetic standards became a major concern of Britain's governing élites, [reaching] a fevered apogee in the mid-twentieth century'. [40]

There is, however, valuable work by Lawrence Black, recently supplemented by Des Freedman, on the Labour Party's struggle to reconcile its suspicion of advertising and the consumer society with its fear of the electoral damage it would suffer by attacking television programmes enjoyed by its working-class supporters.[41]

In fact, it will be shown that the way the Pilkington Committee was appointed, the decisions it took, and the recommendations it made are of substantial importance for contemporary history, and not just that of broadcasting. It started work when the future direction of broadcasting policy was unclear. One possibility was certainly that government policy would have allowed viewers the maximum freedom of choice over what they watched. In that case, there was reason to believe that a combination of popular demand, economic imperatives, and the ideology of free enterprise would have led to a system in Britain resembling the American free-market model, dominated by large capitalist enterprises, each seeking to deliver the maximum number of viewers to advertisers.[42] Had the Committee's work led, directly or indirectly, to a third, and perhaps fourth,

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[39] Richard Weight, *Patriots* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), p.317. He writes that 'the majority' of the Committee were 'academics' (p.316). Out of a total of 11 signatories to the Report, only one was a full-time university teacher: Richard Hoggart, then recently appointed as Professor of English at Birmingham. Francis Newark was Professor of Jurisprudence at Queen's, Belfast, Secretary of the University Council, and Editor of the Northern Ireland Law Reports. Elwyn Jones was Secretary to the University of Wales. A fourth member was a Grammar School Headmaster. The others were two businessmen, a footballer, a trade unionist, a popular entertainer, an engineer, and 'a housewife and mother', who was also a part-time newspaper columnist. See Chapter III, below.

[40] Ibid, p.16

[41] The Labour Party had resolutely opposed the creation of ITV, and had initially promised to abolish it on coming into office. See Lawrence Black, ' "Sheep May Safely Gaze": socialists, television and the people in Britain, 1949-1964' in Black, Dawswell and others, *Consensus or Coercion: The State, the People, and Social Cohesion in Post-war Britain* (Cheltenham: New Clarion, 2001), pp. 28-48. See also Black, *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain, 1951-64* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003) and Des Freedman, *Television Policies of the Labour Party, 1951-2001* (London: Frank Cass, 2003).

[42] Despite the prominence of the European question in British politics in the 1960s, there was little interest in Britain in European broadcasting systems. The (presumed) reluctance of the British audience to watch either subtitled or dubbed material meant that practically no European programmes were shown in Britain, in comparison to the popularity and ubiquity, at the time, of American productions. French television was frequently derided for its lack of political independence. Broadcasting remained under direct government control throughout the Fourth Republic (1945-1958), and, under de Gaulle, from 1958 onwards, television in particular was seen as 'a positive tool of French national and international cultural policy...with daily control from government'. Competition between different state channels financed partly by advertising was not introduced until the 1970s, and private commercial stations not until the 1980s. In West Germany, a broadcasting system instituted by the Allies was much affected by the development of the *Proporz* system

channel being awarded to ITV, or being financed in any way by advertising, there is little doubt that the BBC would have found itself in an increasingly difficult position. It seems likely that the result would have been to reduce the BBC's role to something analogous to Educational Television (or, as it became, Public Television) in the United States, perhaps paid for by subscription, with commercial operators wholly dominant, and a regulator as toothless as the American Federal Communications Commission [43]. But, as has already been shown, by the time the Conservative Government left office, legislation had produced a powerful public body with a degree of control over commercial television far greater than that originally envisaged, and established the BBC in a dominant position. How did the Conservative Party come for so many years - including the first decade of Margaret Thatcher's premiership - to support a system seemingly at odds with its free enterprise principles? A study of Pilkington, this thesis will argue, provides much of the answer.

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by which control of the single station in each *Land* was held by representatives of political parties in proportion to their political strength. A nationwide second channel was controlled on the same principles by the *Laender*. Private commercial stations only began to operate in the 1980s. In the Netherlands, broadcasting organizations were run until the late 1960s by the traditional churches and political parties, with pirate entertainment-oriented commercial stations coming to dominate after being legalized in 1967. Throughout, the British television industry maintained a lack of interest in European television amounting to disdain. See Anthony Smith, ed. *Television: An International History*, 2nd. edn., (Oxford: OUP 1998), pp.41-48, &223-225.

[43] The FCC - already toothless - was to be come even more so after its rules were further relaxed under President Reagan.

(iii): **The relevance or otherwise of television theory**

Reference has already been made to works by media studies scholars like Crisell, Corner and Scannell. But, despite the proliferation over three decades of such studies and the growth of interest in media theory, certain key questions, as this thesis will demonstrate, have remained essentially unaddressed. The following examples will demonstrate this point, and may thereby explain why, although the thesis is informed by their concepts, there will be little direct reference to these studies.

(1). To quote Corner again, the 'development and institutionalisation' of media studies which began in the early seventies in British universities reflected:

> the way in which British political and public life and British popular culture had now become impossible to address without a better and more systematic understanding of media systems, practices and processes.[44]

Historians of television would agree. However, as media studies grew, the field took on a characteristic flavour, which it still retains. As Corner relates, much of it developed from work at Leicester University, and at Birmingham, where the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies was founded by Richard Hoggart, who had, of course, been an influential member of the Pilkington Committee.[45] Leicester emphasised, says Corner, 'a more traditional sociological agenda', concerning itself with the analysis of power and institutional organization, whereas Birmingham focused on 'questions of symbolic organization, and symbolic process'. The former developed what came to be known as the 'political economy' approach, and the latter, especially after Stuart Hall replaced Hoggart as its Director, pursued concepts of 'ideology' and 'hegemony'. What they had in common, as Corner also says, was that each became 'notable' for their different

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[44] John Corner, *Studying Media: Problems of Theory and Method* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 1998), pp.3/4.

[45] Ibid, p.3. Funding for the establishment of the Centre in 1963 came primarily from Allen Lane, the publisher. Hoggart attempted to use his friendship with Sir Edward Boyle, then Minister of Education and a Birmingham MP, to raise extra money from Roy Thomson, owner of Thomson Newspapers and Scottish Television. Hoggart wrote to Boyle thanking him for being 'good enough' to offer to approach Thomson for money: 'Five hundred pounds would be a great help...much better [would be] a sum sufficient to endow one research worker...about £1500 a year'. Boyle passed on the request to Thomson, who declined, on the grounds that he had recently set up a foundation to organize his charitable donations. Otherwise, it may be noted, the Director-to-be, Stuart Hall, Hoggart's first appointment, might have had to suffer some embarrassment over the ultimate source of his salary; as it was, Hoggart wrote to Boyle to thank him for his efforts with Thomson, and for his personal (anonymous) donation, which would go towards books and equipment: 'Our first fellow will greatly appreciate it'. University of Leeds, *Boyle Papers*, MS660/21941/ 21956/ 21957/ 21958, correspondence Boyle/Hoggart/Thomson, April-June 1963.

but similar 'Marxist' or 'Marxian' analysis, an influence which persists, despite competition from feminist, poststructuralist, postmodernist, and post-postmodernist influences, among others. It is my contention that this analysis, by offering an explanation for everything, offers little understanding of detailed questions about organization, policies and programmes, or 'systems, practices and processes'.

(2). Initially, too, what both approaches had in common was an image of the audience as a passive, inert and powerless 'mass' which could be, and was, ruthlessly exploited for both political and economic profit. By the 1980s, though, empirical research had established that different viewers in different situations experienced television programmes quite differently. For example, the cultural theorist John Fiske, following Stuart Hall, could write of 'the gaps and spaces that open television [programmes] up to meanings not preferred by [their] textual structure, but that result from the social experience of the reader'. Cultural studies theorists - taking some postmodernism with their Marxism - were arguing that viewers were using programmes in ways that reflected their own circumstances, preconceptions and needs. In other words, they were shaping the programmes (almost) as much as were the programme-makers.[46] Fiske rejected what he called the old-fashioned Marxist view ('a common belief', he wrote) that 'the capitalist cultural industries' all produce what is 'essentially the same product...whose variety is illusory, for they all promote the same capitalist ideology'. But if he agreed that programme-makers were not all making the same programme, he continued to argue that the television text 'typically tries to limit its meanings to ones that promote the dominant ideology', and thus 'serve[s] the interests of the ruling class'.[47]

Other theorists thought that that view was dangerous. Self-styled 'political economists' in the Leicester tradition insisted that analysis of the media must concentrate not on audiences and reception, but on analysis of the ways in which 'media production has been increasingly commandeered by large corporations and moulded to their interests and strategies'.[48] The work of the cultural theorists, they argued, should not be allowed to help 'liberal pluralists' who

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[46] John Fiske, *Television Culture* (London: Routledge, 1987), p. 64. See Stuart Hall, 'The rediscovery of ideology: the return of the repressed in media studies' in *Culture, Society and Media*, eds. M. Gurevitch, T. Bennett, J. Curran and J. Woolacott (London: Methuen, 1982), pp.56-90. Notable among the empirical audience studies cited by Fiske is David Morley, *The 'Nationwide' Audience: Structure and Decoding* (London: BFI, 1980).

[47] Fiske, *Television Culture*, pp. 309 and 93.

[48] Peter Golding and Graham Murdock, 'Culture, communications and political economy' in *Mass Media and Society* (2nd. edn.), eds. James Curran and Michael Gurevitch (London: Arnold, 1996), p. 16.

mistakenly wanted to claim that the consumer, 'though perhaps a little bruised', is still sovereign. In reality, Peter Golding and Graham Murdock wrote, the consumer's freedom is severely limited by 'material and cultural barriers'.[49] Michael O'Shaughnessy - whose writing seems to incorporate both Birmingham and Leicester traditions - demonstrated the still pervasive influence of the Frankfurt school of Marxists. Their theories of 'ideology' show, he has argued, how 'the dominant groups of any society maintain and retain their power over subordinate groups', like women and the working-class, *through* their control of the media. They manage to win 'the support of the people' by entertaining them, while continuing to oppress them, and even to 'enslave' them.

> *Herein lies the fascination and central contradiction of 'popular culture' and television in their ability to do both these things at once, gratifying the people yet contributing to their enslavement.* (Emphasis in original).[50]

(3). Oliver Boyd-Barrett has also written that the views of the revisionist cultural theorists, as he calls them, might have 'politically undesirable' consequences. It was not, perhaps, so much that the 'revisionists' were wrong, but that their work might undermine workers in the fight for social equality.

> If texts do not determine audience readings, then producers need feel less responsible for the readings that result. If the media are not powerful, why worry about the media? If a set range of texts can generate an infinity of readings, then need producers worry about the limited repertoire of texts that they mass produce for mass audiences? Revisionism undermines the force of the radical critique of mass communication: that it serves the interests of the powerful, and contributes to social reproduction of inequality.[51]

Boyd-Barrett and others were clearly indifferent to questions about how, under capitalism, broadcasting systems could be arranged so as to ensure that the best possible programmes (however defined) could be made available to the largest possible audiences, providing the widest possible choice. In the theorists' view, of course, that choice is largely illusory. Many writers have

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[49] Golding and Murdock, 'Culture, communications...', p.26.

[50] Michael O'Shaughnessy, 'Box Pop: popular television and hegemony' in Goodwin and Whannel (eds.), 1990, p.90. Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer had written: ' The deceived masses are today captivated by the myth of success even more than the successful are. Immovably, they insist on the very ideology which enslaves them'. Adorno and Horkheimer, 'The culture industry: enlightenment as mass deception' in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. J. Cumming (London: Verso, 1979), pp. 133/134 (originally published in German in New York in 1944 and in English in 1972). The 'captivation', 'enslavement' and 'the myth' of success are deduced from theory; they are nowhere established by observation.

[51] Oliver Boyd-Barrett, 'Approaches to new audience research' in *Approaches to Media: A Reader*, eds. O. Boyd-Barrett and C. Newbold (London: Arnold, 1995). Those who have worked in the media will be puzzled by Boyd-Barret's reference to producers 'worrying' about 'the limited repertoire of texts' they mass produce. Not a common concern, in the present writer's experience, although perhaps it should be.

been indifferent to all arguments about the quality of television programmes, whether they involve defending the principles of public service broadcasting against the notion of peoples' television, or simple pub debates over which is better, *East Enders* or *Coronation Street*, or whether either matches up to *The Sopranos* and *Six Feet Under*. Notably, however, some media theorists are now recognizing the legitimacy of such debates, in pubs and elsewhere. [52] Boyd-Barrett and others seemed to be less concerned, however, about whether their theories were right or wrong than about whether they contributed to the strength of the 'radical critique' they wished to make. In fact, the grand over-arching (and, still, frequently Marxist or 'Marxian') constructs of television theorists - in whichever of the two traditions they position themselves or however they combine them - provide little help to those who find their initial premises unconvincing. They succeed, of course, in demolishing the straw figure of the 'liberal pluralist' who believes that the consumer is king, and finds no fault with British or American media institutions. But *can* 'the people' be 'enslaved' without knowing they are? All of them? And, if not all of them, why only some of them? If all mass communication 'serves the interests of the powerful', why should some of 'the powerful' - or the rest of us - prefer one system to another? Have 'the powerful' been - in secret conclaves - arguing with each other about which system will best continue to 'enslave' the working class? Why - for the second half of the last century - did the late capitalist United States have a different system from late capitalist Britain? And late capitalist France, Germany and Japan? [53]

(4). Janet Thumim is another theorist, who has recently produced a valuable collection of detailed studies of television programmes and genres in the 1950s.[54] But her work also shows how Marxist-derived notions remain dominant in this field, and act, in some ways, as a barrier to understanding. In her introductory essay, Thumim refers to 'television's hegemonic power', which is, it seems, something we may take for granted. It is only, she writes, by 'considering the audience' that the consequences of that power may be understood. But, she insists, there is 'considerable difficulty' in 'knowing' either the historical or the contemporary audience, despite

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[52] Christine Geraghty has argued that 'our (sic) eschewal of judgements of quality' has been damaging, and that it is 'important to make qualitative distinctions...within genres like soap opera'. C. Geraghty, 'East Enders vs Coronation Street: Television Studies and Questions of Quality', paper delivered at *Re:Visions:Broadcasting Archaeologies, Histories, Impacts, Futures* conference at Central Lancashire University, 2002. Helen Piper has criticised the 'whole generation of postmodern theorists' who have resisted value judgement, interpretation and commentary 'in favour of perpetual deconstruction'. Piper, *Questions of Value and Problems of Critical Judgement: Drama Serials 1997-2000*, unpubl. PhD. thesis, University of Bristol, 2002, p.53.

[53] For an account of different broadcasting systems, see Smith, *Television: An International History*, and also Tracey, *Decline and Fall.*

[54] Janet Thumim, ed., *Small Screens, Big Ideas.*

the recent profusion of audience studies. Thus, the existence of this 'hegemony' can neither be proved nor disproved by historical or sociological investigation; it is the *theory* alone of 'hegemony' which proves its existence.

In the same essay, she refers to 'the patriarchal state's post-war requirement to reinstate a paternalist hegemony', which, she says, coincided with 'the emergence of mass broadcasting.' 'This was a struggle in which broadcast television played a significant role', she adds.[55] But surely mass broadcasting, by radio, emerged in the 1930s and 1940s, and mass television not until the end of the 1950s, by which time it was contributing to the break-up of the post-war consensus, rather than shoring it up.

In fact, Thumim begins another article in the collection with the claim that, in the 1950s, Britain was in the throes of 'a crisis...a volatile re-alignment of its social values'.

> [In 1955] there were many constituents to this crisis such as the loss of colonial power; the move towards egalitarianism provoked by post-war legislation in health, education and welfare; and shifts in class, gender and race hierarchies consequent on all of these.[56]

Each of her 'constituents' is questionable. Had most Britons recognized by 1955 that colonial power had been lost? Was 'the move towards egalitarianism' effect or cause of post-war legislation? Were shifts in 'class, gender, and race hierarchies' all evident in 1955? Perhaps a more significant factor than any of these was the emergence in the mid-1950s of an affluent working-class, with money to spend, and enough power both in politics and in the market-place to challenge the pre-war ruling class's hegemony, especially in the area of culture and social customs.[57] But Thumim asserts that the hegemony was unbroken in her succeeding study of the prohibition of advertising magazines, 'ad-mags', or 'shoppers' guides', as they were called.[58]

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[55] Thumim, 'Introduction' in ibid, pp. 4 and 10.

[56] Janet Thumim, 'Women at work: popular drama on British television, c1955-60' in ibid, p.207.

[57] See Geoffrey Gorer's research on the spread of television ownership in Chapter II below.

[58] These were ubiquitous advertising features masquerading as magazine programmes. Pilkington, recommending their abolition, described them as follows: 'Characters known to viewers as friendly personalities...endorse, as though they were disinterested parties, the claims of the advertisers. They give the impression of having, on the most sensible homely grounds, decided to recommend this article rather than that'. (Cmnd. 1753, p.81). Sendall claimed in 1982 that they had 'provided a welcome service to the public', but admitted that they gave rise to 'increasing difficulties'. (Sendall, *ITV in Britain*, p.100). He failed to mention that in 1959 he gave the companies the following advice: 'while the presenters...could naturally extol the products featured, they should avoid any impression that [they] had been selected on merit'. It must have been difficult to follow.(Minutes of the meeting of the ITA Advertising Sub-Committee, July 22, 1959).

According to Thumim,

> the problem with the format seems to have been the supposed difficulty, for the audience, of distinguishing between information or opinion disseminated by partisan advertisers and that offered by the (presumed non-partisan) presenters of other magazine programmes. At issue here is the question of the perceived power of television to influence its audiences - hence fears about the gullibility of the audience - and the beloved notion of impartiality or objectivity in the face of conflicting claims.[59]

Thumim speedily goes on to connect opposition to admags with the decision in 1956 to abolish the Fourteen-Day Rule which had once limited television discussion of contemporary political events.

> If broadcasters were to be trusted with public discussion of issues crucial enough to concern parliament, the argument ran, it follows that television broadcasting must not be debased by muddying the generic clarity of its programme boundaries.

No instance of the argument that supposedly 'ran' is actually cited. Thumim continues:

> There's an uneasy paternalism at work here, in which acknowledgement of the democratic good of free speech and of open (though preferably well-informed) debate was locked in a kind of tension with the awful possibility that viewers might not understand the issues correctly - that is, in line with the hegemonic consensus.[60]

The context does not further explain the 'hegemonic consensus', whose existence - yet again - seems to be taken for granted. The reference to 'presumed non-partisan presenters' is, of course, the key to Thumim's arguments, along with the sardonic mention of the 'beloved notion of impartiality or objectivity'. We are being invited to believe that the presenters of admags were somehow more *honest* than those who presented political programmes in which politicians only *seemed* to disagree, and between whom the presenters *pretended* to be impartial. The latter were all in fact, the argument seems to be saying, consciously or unconsciously, part of a conspiracy to persuade us to accept the status quo, the 'hegemonic consensus' in which we would agree that the ruling classes should continue to rule. And those who opposed admags were part of the conspiracy also, whether they knew it or not, along with all who supported the notion of open and honest debate. They were, at worst, hypocrites and conspirators, at best naïve, foolish, or, worst of all perhaps, paternalist. There is, of course, no mention in Thumim's article of the arguments

[59] Thumim, 'Women at work'. p.211.
[60] Ibid, pp. 211/212.

about ad-mags *within* ITV from 1956 onwards, in which companies defended their tendency to make them look like normal programmes, so as to maximise their profits, while the complaisant ITA - for reasons that had to do, surely, with its view of its own interests - insisted on there being a clear demarcation between the sales pitches and the (allegedly) entertaining linking material.[61]

The historian may be concerned with the interplay of such forces in determining the shape that British television was taking at this important stage in its development. For the theorist however, the theory of 'hegemony' comes first, it seems, and the examination of historical events second. Or nowhere.

(5). For the theorists, the Pilkington Report is at least as significant in the history of theory as in the history of television. To quote Corner again:

> [It] can be seen to mark the last serious attempt (and possibly one of the first too!) to bridge the gap between the terms of parliamentary and public debate on national culture and the terms of a more analytically thorough-going cultural critique developing within the arts and social science disciplines of the universities.[62]

The chronology here may be a little puzzling since 'the cultural critique' did not develop much until the 1960s and 1970s. Richard Hoggart only founded his Centre at Birmingham two years after Pilkington reported. The reference may, however be to Hoggart's own *The Uses of Literacy*, first published in 1957, or Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society* from the same year, early flowerings of what was later to become a prolific plant. It is clearly one of the most remarkable characteristics of the Report, and an intriguing clue to the character of the time in which it was written, that, as a document commissioned by a Conservative Government, it should have seemed so imbued with a social philosophy associated with left-wing writers in universities. Hoggart has recalled that, at the time of Pilkington, he saw himself as 'a centre socialist' [63], concerned with the mechanics of the broadcasting system and the way in which it could be improved to help produce a better, more democratic, and even, in some sense, socialist society. That, indeed, was the purpose of his, and Williams', cultural critique.

Here is an extract from Hoggart's defence of the Report, written the year after its publication:

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[61] See, for example, the minutes of the meeting of the ITA sub-committee on advertising, July 22, 1959 British Film Institute: ITC collection (hereafter BFI ITC), ITA papers AS-SCC 8 (59).
[62] Corner, *Popular Television in Britain*, p.10.
[63] Richard Hoggart, *An Imagined Life; Life and Times 1959-1991* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1992), p. 90.

> [It] tried to define a democratic position. It tried to challenge, in its discussion of actual programmes and of broadcasting structures, that socio-cultural stratifying of British society which thinks all demands are satisfied if there are symphony concerts for the highbrows and quiz shows for the masses...[It] sought to extend intellectual and imaginative freedom, to give more room for variety and dissent. Its view of society was based on the idea of change and possibility, on the view that there are within the huge majorities lots of overlapping minorities, on thinking not only about what we are but of what we might become if we were given more varied chances.[64]

It will be seen that here Hoggart is making *his* case more than Pilkington's. They overlap, of course, and for more than forty years, this has led to some confusion. Hoggart has been frequently singled out as the main influence on the Report, and been much criticised for it. For example, the largely unfavourable account of the Report in James Curran and Jean Seaton's history of the press and broadcasting in Britain, first published in 1981, and regularly reprinted since, seems to hold him directly responsible for its failings. The Report is described baldly, without qualification, as 'the product' of false contemporary concerns: 'that the working-class was being absorbed into the middle class, and that working-class culture was decaying because of the industrialisation of leisure'. [65] This assessment has recently been quoted respectfully by Freedman. [66] In fact, nowhere in the Pilkington Report is either concern mentioned, or anything like it. Nor is it mentioned in any of the Committee's minutes, or any papers written for it, including those by Hoggart himself. Nor is there any evidence, or, in reality, any likelihood, that any member of the Committee or its secretariat, apart from Hoggart, ever felt or expressed any such concerns (with the possible exception of Harold Collison, the one trade unionist on the Committee). It is also equally unlikely that either concern would have motivated the Conservative Government, which of course commissioned the Report.

Recently, Peter Bazalgette, chairman of the independent production company responsible for the British version of programmes like *Big Brother*, has drawn the attention of an academic audience to what he called 'a certain impotent rage from the likes of Hoggart that his ilk are no longer in charge of the airwaves'. [67] Bazalgette also referred to Hoggart's 'outpourings of bile at public taste'. Both the quality of Hoggart's prose and the endeavour it represents may well account for his public standing, thus inviting such criticism. The prose, and the endeavour, may also be

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[64] Richard Hoggart, 'Difficulties of democratic debate' in *Speaking to Each Other, Vol. I* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p.196.
[65] James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility: The Press and Broadcasting in Britain,* (4th edition) (London: Routledge 1995), p.206.
[66] Freedman, *Television Policies of the Labour Party*, p.31.
[67] Peter Bazalgette, Fitzwilliam Lecture, Cambridge, November 20, 2003, pp.9/10. I am grateful to Mr. Bazalgette for sending me the text of his lecture.

properly judged as heroic, and justify the levels of praise as well as the vilification he has received. However, as will be shown later, Hoggart's accounts of the Committee's work are fallible, and indeed may have contributed to misreadings of the historical record. Clearly his courage and determination, along with his profound commitment to a democratic culture, and his self-styled 'puritanism' [68], made a substantial contribution to Pilkington, along with his ability compared to some other Committee members, and his capacity for hard work. But it is also possible to over-estimate the extent of his influence.

One significant figure, whose importance is largely forgotten, was Dennis Lawrence, the civil servant chosen as the Committee's Secretary.[69] Like Hoggart, Lawrence was a scholarship boy brought up in a working-class family. They were both aged 41 in 1960; they had both fought in the Second World War. They were to become close friends. With perhaps a greater degree of single-mindedness even than Hoggart, Lawrence believed strongly in the importance of broadcasting in bringing about the good society, or at least a better one. Demonstrating a clear loyalty to the Beveridge tradition in Whitehall,[70] he was dedicated to the ideals of education for everyone, and of social betterment and social inclusion. Retiring from the Civil Service in 1978 as an Under-Secretary, he was to become the first Chief Executive of the Co-operative Development Agency, and later was to publish a book on industrial democracy, which he called *The Third Way*.[71] He had wanted the job on the Committee, and he was determined, as we shall see, to use the opportunity to make his mark, and to change things for the better. It was he who wrote much of the Report, and it eventually took the form he had always planned that it should.

Of the more general influences at work on the Report, four significant factors can be discerned. With much overlapping between them, they fitted together to form a powerful consensus. First was a shared commitment among members of the social and political élite - such as those who sat on the Committee - to a set of middle-class or even patrician values, combined with nostalgia for the recent past in which their hegemony had seemed unchallenged, as well as their fear for the future. Bazalgette has described them as a collection of 'the great, the good, the prejudiced, and

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[68] For Hoggart's puritanism, see below, p. 72-73.

[69] It should however be noted that Mark Jarvis has recognized that Lawrence 'helped turn the emphasis...towards the moral and cultural impact of television and away from purely financial matters'. (Jarvis 2005, p.130).

[70] Like Beveridge, on leaving the Civil Service, he was active in the Liberal Party (in Lawrence's case, the Liberal Democrats).

[71] Dennis Lawrence, *The Third Way* (London: Routledge, 1988).

the power-crazed'. [72] As we shall see, they were certainly overwhelmingly prejudiced in favour of the BBC. Secondly, coupled with the above, was, as I shall argue, a widespread moral panic about the growth and influence of television generally, which dominated the 'evidence' the Committee received.[73] Linked to this, thirdly, was the distaste for advertising and the consumer society among many left-wing intellectuals and politicians, and some conservative ones, and a almost completely unchallenged sense of injustice about ITV profits. Lastly, and of very considerable significance, there was the personal influence and the proudly paternalistic, and firmly middlebrow, attitudes of Sir Harry Pilkington himself, a bicycling millionaire, chairman of the family glass-making company, a lover of roses, tennis, and Gilbert and Sullivan, who was believed to know the first name of every one of the workers on his (several) shop floors.

It should also be remembered in considering the subsequent history of the Report's recommendations that there was one more important player, another scholarship boy, the Postmaster-General Reginald Bevins, from a lower-class background in Liverpool.[74] He appointed the Committee (though under fairly close supervision by Macmillan and Butler) and was responsible for the 1963 Act. He and Sir Harry had fallen out by the time the Committee reported (and there was considerable tension, too, between him and Lawrence). But it was he, together with his senior advisers in the Post Office, as we shall see, who accepted the criticisms of ITV, and incorporated the substance of them in the 1963 Act, despite considerable opposition from inside the cabinet, and from Tory backbenchers.

[72] Bazalgette, Fitzwilliam Lecture, p.8.
[73] For more on the 'moral panic', see Chapter Two below.
[74] Bevins' father was a travelling salesman who later kept a newsagent's shop. Reginald Bevins, *The Greasy Pole* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), pp. 9-10.

(iv): **People and Things**

Much work in television theory, it has been argued, fails to offer useful answers to general questions about 'the systems, practices and processes' of broadcasting, and the relationships that have developed over time between governments, broadcasting systems, and viewers. Similarly, it fails to address the particular question with which the present study is concerned: why - despite the widespread derision for all forms of 'paternalism' that became characteristic of the 1960s - the 'paternal' tradition of British broadcasting, of which Brian Young was so proud, was so firmly established at the start of that decade that it was a generation before it regularly came to be questioned.

Here, a largely chronological approach will be adopted as the only satisfactory way to ground the analysis in what - at any rate, according to this observer - actually seems to have happened, enabling us to unpick and report accurately a complex series of events. It is hoped that the information provided may help to refine the theory.

The study begins by looking at the political and social background to, and the circumstances of, the Committee's appointment, and examines how it set about its work, and how it reached its conclusions. It also examines critically the strategies used by the BBC in ensuring that it maintained its dominant position. It looks at the responses to the publication of the Report, and the controversies and political disputes during the passage of the 1963 Act. It uses a combination of written and oral evidence, in the belief that the former may corroborate the latter, and the latter may illuminate the former and help fill in some holes. It ends both with a reassessment of the Report's historical significance, and of the qualities of the arguments both pro- and anti-. Aware of postmodernist rejections of any notion of 'the ostensibly disinterested scholarship of academics studying the past objectively and "for its own sake"' [75], I offer no apology for not being a disinterested observer. My interest in the subject derives from a career as a journalist and producer/director in commercial television which began in the year of Pilkington's publication. And the work is inevitably coloured by being written at a time when the digital revolution in television is well-advanced, with the majority of British viewers now being able to choose between dozens, if not hundreds, of channels, and when ITV, reduced practically to a single

[75] Keith Jenkins 'Introduction: on being open about our closure' in Jenkins ed, *The Postmodern History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.6.

company, and Channel Four, have both very largely abandoned their commitment to public service, and the role - the very existence - of the BBC is again being questioned.

Pilkington's achievement was to safeguard public service television for more than thirty years. For this, it deserves the recognition which it has largely failed to get from viewers, and from producers and others in the industry, as well as from historians and media students. But far from starting a debate about what public service television should mean in a democratic society, it only confirmed the belief of an articulate minority that 'serious' was good, and 'trivial' bad, that American-style competition to meet the requirements of a majority of viewers for entertainment was harmful, and that they, the educated middle-classes, knew best. Was a sustained debate possible? Probably not. The transparent priority of the ITV companies, as putative opponents in any debate, was, unsurprisingly, the defence of their profits. In the end the argument became one about money. No debate was anyway likely to take place as both sides were happy with the settlement, especially after 1968. The influence of Pilkingtonian ideas meant that, willingly or not, ITV regularly showed opera from Glyndebourne, and much else besides, to please a minority audience consisting mostly of the respectable and the comfortable. And, as a result, ITV was allowed to stay in business, and to remain profitable.

Pilkington's historical importance is not, however, due only to its significance for media scholars. As I shall show, it exposed the increasingly irreconcilable rift in the Conservative Party between *laissez-faire* and paternalism, and provides for contemporary readers a vivid example of the formation of government policy in the face of pressure groups and public opinion, at a time of rapid social change.

Much of the evidence that will be used comes from the National Archives, not least from the 950 files relating to the Pilkington Committee itself, which Dennis Lawrence arranged to have preserved. Some of them contain hundreds of documents, others being bound volumes of written and oral evidence, with thousands of pages of transcripts. Gaps in the record, as will be shown, are themselves revealing. Some participants in the debates, notably Reginald Bevins, have left their own accounts, and I have been able to look at the very scant papers Bevins' family have preserved. There is much relevant material in the archives of the Conservative Party, and ITA records are in the archive of the Independent Television Commission, now maintained by the British Film Institute. The BBC Written Archives are a fruitful source of valuable material. Hansard and contemporary newspapers and magazines are particularly useful. Sir Harry

Pilkington's meticulously kept (if not always particularly revealing) diaries have been made available to me, thanks to the generosity of members of the Pilkington family, with whom I have had several interesting conversations. Some of the correspondence of Joyce Grenfell - one of the Committee's most influential members - is in a Cambridge library. The papers of two other Committee members have also been consulted. I have been fortunate in being able to speak to two surviving Committee members, Richard Hoggart and Elizabeth Whitley. Dennis Lawrence has kindly granted me long interviews, and has written to me.

In an interview originally published in 1993, Hoggart regretted 'the excessive use' by many of his successors in cultural studies 'of the abstract language of theory'.

> That is why, when I do sometimes speak to groups about cultural studies today, I tend to hammer on about the need to look first at people and things so that you do not run the risk of seeing people and things through a preformed theoretic prism.

But he adds:

> I don't think I have much effect.[76]

This work, at any rate, will look at people and things.

[76] Richard Hoggart, 'Looking back: an interview with Nicholas Treadwell' in *Between Two Worlds* (London: Aurum Press, 2001), p.310.

Chapter Two: **Wiggle-dances and the licence to print money**

(i): **Introduction**

Dost thou think because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale?'
Sir Toby Belch (to Malvolio)
William Shakespeare: Twelfth Night, or What You Will, Act II, Scene iii.

This chapter looks at the appointment of the Pilkington Committee and, in particular, at the social, intellectual and political climate in which attitudes to television developed among decision-makers at the end of the 1950s. It argues that the crucial element determining the framework in which the Committee would operate was an incipient moral panic among élite groups about the effects of television.[1] Also significant were pro-BBC sentiments among senior civil servants, the interests of certain monopolists within ITV, and governmental indecision and procrastination, which led to a very belated and hesitant response. Dominating everything was a factor that had not been predicted, and was to prove a major political problem for the government: the size of ITV company profits. In the end, it was to become crucial in determining government policy. Those in government who believed that the excesses of popular television had to be restrained found themselves in alliance with those who wanted more for the Exchequer from the profits of ITV.

(ii) **Geoffrey Gorer, 'Televiewing', Social Class and the Moral Panic.**

For four weeks in the spring of 1958, the Sunday Times published a series of feature articles posing the question: 'Television has altered the way of life of millions. Is this for good or evil?' [2]

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[1] The term 'moral panic' was popularised by the sociologist Stanley Cohen in *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 2nd edn., 1972). He describes it (p.9) as when 'a condition, episode, person, or group of persons, emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values'. It is defined in *The Dictionary of Sociology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), ed. Allan Johnson, as 'an extreme social response to the perception that the moral condition of society is deteriorating at a calamitous pace' (p.184).

[2] *The Sunday Times,* April 13, 1958. The paper was then still owned by Lord Kemsley, who had fallen out with other members of a consortium which had been offered an ITV franchise in 1954, and from which he had then withdrawn. His paper's treatment of ITV was generally unsympathetic. See Curran and Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility,* p.85, and Sendall, *ITV in Britain, vol. 1* , p.82.

It ran under the byline of Geoffrey Gorer, celebrated author of studies of the American and English character.

Gorer was not the sole author. This 'exhaustive inquiry in a representative selection of English homes' had been organized 'in co-operation' with 'the research department of Messrs. Mather and Crowther, the well-known advertising agency'. As Gorer later wrote, two thousand interviews had been 'administered to a stratified sample of the English population [along with] a number of more searching interviews'.[3] It was clearly an expensive operation, intended to improve the agency's understanding of its audience, but also, perhaps, to impress the importance of the medium on its Sunday Times-reading potential clients.

'On a typical Sunday evening last winter', the first article began, 'two out of every five English people – forty-one out of a hundred – were watching a television set'.

It has been claimed by Gareth Stanford that Gorer was 'fairly sanguine about the spread and development of television'.[4] He cites the last of the four articles, which asks whether television is 'a time-waster'. "Yes, definitely it is", a middle-aged maintenance engineer from Sutton Coldfield is quoted as saying. "But I'm all for it, as it relaxes you". 'You can't say fairer than that', the article ends.[5]

In fact, far from being sanguine, Gorer seems to have contributed to the 'moral panic' about the effects of television that was already a significant factor among the educated and the middle classes. For example, he compared his current findings with those he published in *Exploring English Character* in 1955 in regard to what he called 'inactivity'. Then, he wrote in 1958, a significant proportion of the population had regarded inactivity as 'sloth...to use the ecclesiastical term', with unmistakeable overtones of sinfulness. Now they called it 'relaxing, as if there were some positive merit in [it]' and considered that when they were inactive they were 'vaguely doing themselves moral, physical and intellectual good'. He added: 'I am in little doubt that this quite profound change in the way English men and women view their own inactivity is very

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[3] Letter from Geoffrey Gorer to *The Times*, March 11, 1959.
[4] Gareth Stanton, *Gorer's Gaze: Aspects of the inauguration of audience studies in British Television* (London: Goldsmith's College Anthropology Research Papers, 2000) p. 18.
[5] *Sunday Times,* May 4, 1958. Perhaps this last sentence - uncharacteristic of Gorer's normal style - was added either by Mather and Crowther or by the *Sunday Times*.

closely connected with the spread of television'.[6] He clearly disapproved. Others might wonder if the appearance of such a 'profound' change in so few years may be better explained by faults in the survey's methods or in its interpretation.

There is, in fact, ample evidence in the language of the articles that Gorer shared the views of those he describes as 'abstainers': that is those who chose not to have a television set. They were, he said, 'far more numerous in the more prosperous classes and among the middle-aged and elderly', and among them 'reading is particularly popular'. If asked what they missed by not having television 'they tend to go into a tirade about the deleterious effect of television on the social life and the character of those weak-willed enough to own one'. Many Sunday Times readers would, of course, have been 'abstainers', as would a high proportion of those in government, and members of government-appointed Boards, Authorities and Committees.[7]

Some in the middle and upper-middle classes did watch television, though, and the survey found that they particularly liked 'topical programmes, discussions and brains trusts, serious music and ballet'. They claimed to dislike 'variety, dance music, jazz and rock 'n' roll'. By contrast, working-class viewers admitted to liking 'films and serials, variety, and quizzes' and, above all, disliked 'topical programmes, discussions and brains trusts, serious music and ballet'.[8] Nearly half of all working-class viewers were said to be 'addictive', watching for four hours or more a night, described, in colourful prose, as having 'all sense of proportion lost in their gross indulgence, and their family life, if not wrecked, at least emptied of nearly all its richness and warmth, their children's' education often imperilled by the absence of any quiet place to do homework'. And, among such addicts in the United States, 'whose lives are almost completely restricted to working, sleeping, eating and watching', the Journal of the American Medical Association had reported cases of thrombosis in the legs.

The problem was being exacerbated as increasing working-class affluence meant that potential 'addicts' were growing in numbers.

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[6] *Sunday Times,* April 20, 1958.

[7] A typical ITA member was Mr. Thomas Hawkesley Summerson, described in his local newspaper as an 'ex-Harrovian, former Durham County cricketer, and... a leading figure in North-East industry'. The paper added that 'Mr. Summerson says his work has left him little time for televiewing lately' , and quoted him as saying "I think I last saw a programme through about four months ago" . *The Middlesborough Evening Gazette*, February 2, 1957.

[8] *The Sunday Times,* April 20, 1958.

> Five years ago [in 1953], there was something near an absolute majority of middle-class ownership of TV sets, with the greatest amount of ownership in the upper middle class; even three years ago [in 1955] there was something not very far from a balance between middle-class and working-class viewers. Today [in 1958] there are approximately three owners of a set from the working-classes for every two from the middle classes; and if, as seems likely, this pattern continues over the next few years, the television audience will be at least two-thirds working-class.[9]

And half of them (approximately) would be 'addicts'. Gorer's research is worth resurrecting to show how television was becoming, for the first time, a genuinely 'mass' medium, and how rapidly the class make-up of its audience was changing. We can also see the extent to which this threatened middle-class hegemony over the medium. The BBC's pre-1955 attitude to its audience was reflected in the fact that it regularly pre-empted a whole evening for opera from Glyndebourne. Perhaps opera, even on the very small screens then available with even smaller loudspeakers, did appeal to a substantial proportion of its audience. But by 1954 the BBC realised, according to critic Peter Black, that this was driving some viewers 'crazy' (however comfortably-off they might be), and presented from Glyndebourne that year only one opera, although there were still no fewer than five studio productions.[10] By 1958, when ITV had successfully established itself, the dominance of the BBC's old middle-class audience was threatened further; new, working-class viewers were buying dual-channel television sets in ever-greater numbers, and looming large in the demographics. They were choosing to watch ITV's serials, variety programmes and quizzes, and, as we have seen, largely turning their back on the BBC.

An interesting group of Cabinet Office documents from December 1957 and January 1958 shows how worried the BBC was. A senior figure, reporting to his Board of Governors on the precipitate fall in BBC viewing in 1957, had characterised ITV as being addicted 'to wiggle-dances, give-aways, panels and light entertainment'.[11] The BBC sought and found allies in the Civil Service. A draft paper arguing that it had the right to continue to 'be regarded as having a special position' in British life had been sent in December 1957 by Sir Ian Jacob, the Director-General, to Burke Trend, the Assistant Cabinet Secretary. Jacob and Trend then had 'some discussion' of the draft, over which, it is apparent, they largely agreed. Trend wrote to confirm their common view that the document should not follow the 'purely negative approach' of criticising the ITA, but that it should concentrate on portraying the BBC's merits. Jacob returned a re-written and final version

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[9] *The Sunday Times,* April 13, 1958.
[10] Peter Black, *The Mirror in the Corner* (London: Hutchinson, 1972), p. 20.
[11] BBC Board of Governors, *Papers*, 'Report by Deputy Director of Television, 1 Jan to 31 March, 1957', quoted in Briggs, *History, vol. 5*, p. 16.

of the document to Trend, who wrote back in January to say that 'in its present form, it puts [the BBC's] case about as well as it could be put'.

In both draft and revised papers, the BBC described itself as 'a great national institution ...by reason of its nature, its record, and its national and international standing'. But among the paragraphs that appear only in the revised version was one under the heading 'quality of personnel'. 'The BBC has attracted, trained, and kept staff of the highest quality', it said.

> The Staff is not a Civil Service, but it has achieved in many respects the same sense of purpose and service to the public which has been the main factor in maintaining the prestige and quality of that profession ... it is highly desirable that that spirit should be retained.

Civil servants were unlikely to disagree with that.

Another new section declared that, as commercial television 'must go for the majority audiences',

> the interests therefore of very large, and on the whole *the more educated* (my italics), sectional, and geographical minorities are bound up with the maintenance of public service broadcasting.

In short, if civil servants wanted broadcasting which would suit their interests (in, perhaps, both senses of the word), they needed to support the BBC. Politicians had to be cultivated, too. Jacob had seen Cabinet Ministers Butler and Heath in Oxford, and had taken the opportunity to give them copies of the revised document. 'I had a very useful talk about it all with the former, who seemed very receptive', he told Trend, and he ended with 'many thanks for the trouble you took over the draft'.[12]

Meanwhile, viewers with dual-channel sets who could choose between the BBC and ITV were said to be dividing four-to-one in favour of ITV. The result was that ITV profits were vastly increased.[13] Scottish Television began operating in the autumn of 1957, and shortly afterwards its Canadian owner, Roy Thomson, is famously said to have told neighbours at an Edinburgh social function that what he held was 'a licence to print money'.[14] He was hardly exaggerating. His

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[12] Both the 'draft' and the 'final' BBC documents are in The National Archives (hereafter TNA:) CAB 21/4725. See also minutes dated December 24 and December 30, 1957, and January 14, 1958; letter from Sir Ian Jacob to Burke Trend, January 14, 1958; letter from Trend to Jacob, January 16, 1958. The following March, Sir Ian and Lady Jacob were invited to spend a weekend at the Butlers' country house in Essex. Butler papers, Trinity College, Cambridge, RAB E8/2, letter Butler to Jacob, March 21, 1958.

[13] Crisell, *Introductory History of British Broadcasting,* p.110.

[14] Briggs, *History* vol. 5, p.11, quoting R. Braddon, *Roy Thomson of Fleet* (London: Collins, 1965), p.240. Braddon adds: 'Anxiously [his neighbours] and his advisers begged him not to repeat this observation elsewhere - his neighbours because, even for Thomson, it was a little brash, and his advisers because they

programmes, according to his biographer, 'were no worse than anywhere else in Britain and...orders [from advertisers] flowed fast into his ever-open books'.[15] One programme contractor, ATV, declared in July 1958 in its Annual Report that operating profit had risen in one year from £448,000 to £4,053,000.[16] On average in that year, it has been calculated, ITV companies were making an average of 130% profit on capital per annum, before tax.[17]

(iii) 'A Special Form of Stalling'

The government was certainly concerned. On July 28, three weeks after ATV had published its results, Trend minuted Prime Minister Macmillan that, on broadcasting policy, one of 'the two most pressing current problems [was] the size of the television contractors' profits'. The other was the imminent feasibility of a third, and perhaps a fourth, television channel, which would present a dilemma about whether they should be given to the BBC or the ITA. As we have seen, the BBC's campaign had already begun. A sub-committee of the Home Affairs Committee of the Cabinet had decided that there were no practicable means of controlling the contractors' profits, and no case for a third programme, however hungry viewers might be for more television. Ernest Marples, the Postmaster-General with responsibility for broadcasting, felt, however, that these decisions would be 'unpopular' and was calling for 'an independent committee [to be set up] as a protection for the government'. Trend declared that the question was:

> simply, whether it is less disadvantageous politically to face the difficulty of reaching decisions, and the odium of admitting inability to curb the programme contractors' profits, or to risk the dangers of an enquiry in the period preceding a General Election.[18]

The Cabinet decided to do nothing. Meanwhile, the ITV companies were pressing for increased viewing hours, and the BBC was insisting that it would need to retain more of the licence fee to be able to compete.[19] Marples tried again the following year, 1959. In response, a minute dated February 18 set out the Prime Minister's thinking. There were three possible courses of action:

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considered he talked too much anyway [but] he flew off to Canada where, in an interview with Time magazine, he repeated his *bon mot* verbatim'.

[15] Braddon, *Roy Thomson,* p.240.

[16] *The Times,* July 8, 1958.

[17] Briggs, *History* vol. 5, p. 11.

[18] TNA: PREM 11/3669, 'Broadcasting Policy', 29 July 1958.

[19] The combined licence fee for radio and television was £4 a year, of which £1 was excise duty. It was planned for the BBC's share of net licence revenue, after allowing for costs of collection, to rise from 92½% in 1959/60 to 100% in 1961/2.

A. To announce the decisions [to do nothing] now. Although there seems to be no public demand, the announcement will certainly cause an outcry and the organizations concerned are in a position to create a public demand without much difficulty.
B. To continue to stall. This would probably not be easy ... but would it be quite so difficult as the PMG suggests?
C. To appoint a committee of enquiry (which is only a special form of stalling) ... but can it be assumed ... that the government would not be compelled by political pressure to allow other and more sensitive issues to be discussed – e.g. the status of the B.B.C. as 'the main instrument for broadcasting', the policy of the I.T.A., the profits of the programme contractors and so forth? [20]

A Cabinet sub-committee was set up under Butler. Unsurprisingly, it recommended option B. 'My colleagues felt' Butler reported to the Prime Minister 'that the mere fact of setting up an enquiry would stir up mud' (Macmillan, using his red pen, underlined the word 'mud') 'e.g.' continued Butler 'the alleged profits of the ITA (sic), and practices which some regard as undesirable. It was felt that the mere setting up of an enquiry would create among our own supporters the very trouble which an enquiry was designed to heal'.[21]

The government, and the Conservative Party, were to find that mud sticking to their feet throughout the next parliament. The BBC's charter was due to expire in 1962 and the ITA's statutory existence, as we have seen, in 1964. Decisions about the future of both institutions needed to be made, and about the third channel. They could well cause trouble in the party. But the stalling would sooner or later have to end.

[20] TNA: PREM 11/3669, 'Broadcasting Development', 18 February 1959.
[21] TNA: PREM 11/3669, Home Secretary to the Prime Minister, 9 March 1959.

(iv): **The Conservative Party and the Broadcasters.**

We might speculate about what the 'undesirable practices' referred to by Butler actually were. Clearly, they were bound up with the unpalatably popular variety shows and quizzes, and by controversies over the contractors' profits.[22] But if there was nervousness about ITV, Conservative attitudes to the BBC were at best ambivalent. It still reflected middle-class tastes. As Gerald Beadle, Director of Television from 1956 put it, 'to have lowered the proportion of intelligent programmes below the level of one's competitor would have opened up a vast wasteland from which it would have been impossible thereafter to recover'.[23] Much of the middle-class (and therefore Conservative-leaning) audience stayed loyal. In some middle-class homes it was a point of honour never to switch to ITV.[24]

Among the leaders of the Conservative party who had been bitterly opposed to the introduction of commercial television was Lord Hailsham. By the late 1950s he had become Party Chairman, and he remained an opponent. In the debate in the House of Lords over its introduction in 1953, having recently inherited his title, he compared those Conservatives in favour of it to 'the ancient Israelites who applauded the erection of a golden calf in the Temple, [in order to] provide [an] element of healthy competition'.[25] He later wrote, after his defeat over ITV by 'the bulk' of Conservatives, who, in their 'almost inspissated ignorance of the issues...thought they were fighting for liberty and freedom of choice', that he had planned to give up party politics altogether.[26] In 1975, he was still opposed to advertising on television, writing that 'the introduction into the home of the most powerful advertising stimulant ever devised' may have been 'an important contributory cause of ...wage demands and inflation'.[27]

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[22] On November 19, 1958, the Conservative but anti-ITV *Daily Express* published a highly critical news story claiming that Norman Collins, one of the founders of ATV and then its Deputy Chairman, had seen the value of his original shareholding in the company rise over four years from £2,250 to £501,750, perhaps £15M in 2002 prices.

[23] Gerald Beadle, *Television, A Critical Review,* 1963, p. 73, quoted in Briggs, History, p. 17.

[24] Of twenty-one middle-class householders who had acquired sets in the 1950s interviewed in 1991, only one admitted to remembering 'the quizzes', 'some' wanted to 'distance themselves' from ITV's 'popular vulgarity', and one remembered banning it altogether. See Tim O'Sullivan, 'Television Memories and Cultures of Viewing, 1950-1965', in Corner, ed., *Popular Television in Britain,* (British Film Institute: 1991) , pp.166/178.

[25] *House of Lords Debates,* November 25 1953, col.517, quoted in Sendall, *ITV in Britain,* vol.1, p.1.

[26] Lord Hailsham of Marylebone, *A Sparrow's Flight: Memoirs* (London: Collins, 1990), p.277.

[27] Lord Hailsham, *The Door Wherein I Went,* (London: Collins, 1975), p.127.

Many in all classes did still see the BBC, in some way, as Britain's 'main instrument for broadcasting', often because of the prestige it had earned during the war. Charles Bellairs, an official at Conservative Central Office and secretary to the Conservative Parliamentary Broadcasting Committee, wrote early in 1960 to a backbench M.P. who had asked for help with a speech he had to deliver:

> I think it fair to say that throughout a long history of both sound and television, the BBC have established an excellent reputation for objectivity, good taste and accuracy. The Corporation had an unrivalled reputation during the war years. It would be extremely foolish to do anything which would tend to whittle down the standing of the BBC in the eyes of foreign countries.[28]

But many others had mistrusted it almost since its inception.[29] In 1951, Selwyn Lloyd, then a Conservative backbench M.P., added his own Minority Report to the Beveridge Report, in which he called for a new television service to be funded by advertising, leaving the BBC to broadcast only on radio. 'If people are to be trusted with the franchise', he declared, 'surely they should be able to decide for themselves whether they want to be educated or entertained in the evening'.[30] Neatly, he had struck at the BBC's vision of its educational role (which its opponents saw as propagandizing) as well as at its monopoly. In 1953, 'competitive television' was supported by a large majority at Party Conference, its supporters having claimed that the vote over advertising-funded television was 'a symbolic vote for or against private enterprise'. [31]

The 1954 Television Act which introduced competition for an 'experimental' period of only ten years did so in a far less full-blooded capitalist form than many had hoped. One Conservative critic complained in the House of Commons that it was 'designed to placate a whole lot of sloppy-minded people'.[32] As we shall see later, the Act, and the Independent Television Authority it set up, were coming under severe criticism in the late fifties, mostly from the left (who had opposed it in the first place), but there were many conservatives on both left and right who were equally uneasy, for a variety of reasons. Some, as Ramsden says, had been disappointed in the

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[28] Letter from Charles Bellairs to Fergus Montgomery, M.P., in CPA: CRD: 2/20/15, January 22, 1960.
[29] As early as 1934, Sir Patrick Gower, who had moved from the Cabinet Office to work for the Conservative Party, wrote that he was 'getting more and more disturbed about the subtle propaganda...put out by the BBC'. He was arranging for 'somebody to listen in every night and take down in shorthand anything that savours of tendentious socialist propaganda'. Quoted in Richard Cockett, 'The Party, Publicity and the Media' in *Conservative Century: The Conservative Party since 1900,* eds. Anthony Seldon and Stuart Ball (Oxford: OUP, 1994), p.557.
[30] Selwyn Lloyd, *Minority Report to the Report of the Committee on Broadcasting (Cmnd. 8116)* (London, HMSO, 1951), p.201.
[31] John Ramsden, *The Age of Churchill and Eden* (London: Longman, 1995), p 254.
[32] Sir Herbert Williams, M.P., *Official Report House of Commons (Hansard)*, vol. 527, col. 209, 4 May 1954.

hope 'that commercial television ... would give a platform to free enterprise, capital and management'[33], to act as a counter to the BBC's perceived left-wing bias.

In May 1956, when the ITV challenge to the BBC was still looking uncertain, the backbench broadcasting committee urged its secretary, Bellairs, to arrange for the Party Chairman, Oliver Poole, and his deputy Donald Kaberry, to attend a meeting to discuss the BBC's 'Socialistic bias', about which the increasing size of the television audience and the supposed power of television made them more concerned than ever. The problem was that when the BBC was challenged, as Bellairs wrote to Michael Fraser, Director of the Conservative Research Department, it would simply reply that 'over a period, the numbers of Socialist and Conservative broadcasters were very evenly balanced'. It was nonetheless the Committee's view, Bellairs reported, 'that, (a), socialist broadcasters were invariably given better listening (sic) times than Conservative broadcasters, and, (b), the programmes in which they took part often lasted longer'. There was particular concern 'that three of the most well-known broadcasters on current affairs, Aidan Crawley, Woodrow Wyatt and Christopher Mayhew, were all socialists whose reputations had been built up by the BBC'.[34]

Bellairs himself thought that 'there was little in this'. Nonetheless, Poole and Kaberry agreed at the next meeting that, although the political balance on radio was 'pretty even', it was 'not at all satisfactory' on BBC television. But the problem for Conservatives was that it had to be accepted that the commentators named were all 'extremely good' performers. Central Office was, however, setting up its own studio whereby 'any member who was interested could be tested for television' and 'once the right person was found' a case would be made to the BBC to use him.[35] In fact, since 1952, a mock TV studio had been installed for training purposes in Central Office under the guidance of television professional (and technicians' union activist) Winifred Crum-Ewing.[36]

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[33] Ramsden, 1995, p. 254.
[34] CPA: CRD, 2/20/15, note from Charles Bellairs to Michael Fraser, May 10, 1956. It is worth pointing out that all three named commentators were to abandon 'socialism' and the Labour Party long before the end of their careers.
[35] CPA: CRD, 2/20/15, Charles Bellairs to Michael Fraser, June 22, 1956.
[36] Cockett in Seldon and Ball, ., 1994, p. 566. Crum-Ewing was regularly elected into leadership positions in the left-wing dominated ACTT until well into the 1960s despite her vocal Conservatism.

Some members, wrote Bellairs, had thought that the new independent companies might be more sympathetic to Conservatives. But Poole understood the rules of the game as it was now being played:

> The Chairman took the view that there was not much that could be done, since the ITA (sic) were almost entirely interested in building up audience figures, and, generally speaking, programmes of a political or educational nature did not have such a wide appeal as those of a purely entertainment value.

After Poole and Kaberry left, discussion continued, becoming more philosophical in tone.

> There was still an element which took a completely negative attitude – namely, that Conservatism as such did not lend itself particularly readily to the medium of television, and therefore our best line was to protest to the BBC against any programme which had a suspicion of Socialist bias ... I was rather appalled that so many members should consider that it was so difficult to put over the Conservative viewpoint on television. I cannot for the life of me see why. We have to face the fact that we are living in a television age, and it is no good trying to put the clock back.

Bellairs added that Sir Robert Grimston, the Committee's Chairman, 'and others', favoured the idea of a large number of commercial television companies competing both with each other and the BBC, to produce 'much the same set-up as the Press', with 'some pro-Socialist programmes, some pro-Tory ones'.[37] That the system should be changed to encourage competition between commercial television companies was an idea which was to dominate much Conservative thinking about the medium for several years.

In May, 1958, Bellairs produced a paper on 'competitive television' for his Committee, recognising the importance of the role it now played. 'The general public clearly like it', he wrote. 'The fears that the programmes would be spoiled by advertisements have, to say the least, been shown to be grossly exaggerated ... many people find the advertisements amusing and entertaining'. Also fears of a chase after a mass audience, 'which really amounted to a vote of no confidence in the British people, have been shown to be groundless'. The ITA's Annual Report for1956/57 'cites plays by Ibsen, Tchekhov, Shaw and others'.[38] The BBC, Bellairs wrote, had 'already approached the Postmaster-General about operating a second service; the ITA is likely to do so soon'. Those would be 'acceptable', he thought, but 'once the principle of competition is admitted, there seems no valid reason why it should be restricted as at present'. It was becoming hard to support the compromise represented by the 1954 Act. For Conservative defenders of free enterprise, there was difficulty above all in accepting the networking system, which had evolved

[37] CPA: CRD 2/20/15, Bellairs to Fraser, June 22, 1956.
[38] CPA: CRD 2/20/15, Bellairs, 'Competitive Television', May 16, 1958. Bellairs seems later to have changed his mind. See his letter to Montgomery, pp. 45-46 below.

early in the life of ITV as a consequence of the companies' speedy realisation that they would find it more profitable to share and network their programmes than to fill airtime with their own productions, and compete with each other.[39] At a meeting of the backbench committee in November 1958, 'a number of members took the view that the start of a third television service should provide an opportunity to bring about that much needed competition between the contracting companies which was envisaged in the Act'[40].

In the same month, Political and Economic Planning (PEP) published a pamphlet entitled 'Prospects for Television'. Bellairs included extracts in a letter to the committee Chairman. Again there was raised the 'almost (sic) embarrassingly high level of profits' in ITV, and the suggestion that they could be reduced by providing competition for the existing companies from a third television service set up as 'another national network on the present lines of ITV'. PEP quoted a statement by Prince Littler, the Chairman of ATV, in the company's Annual Report for 1957/58, that his company 'would welcome the introduction of a third service in competition with its own operations'. Bellairs thought this 'was a rather remarkable departure from normal monopoly practice'. But he had been talking to Ernest Marples, himself a self-made businessman, who had spotted the loophole. Bellairs added:

> What the PMG fears would happen if the third programme went to the ITA was that any new contracting companies ... would get by far the greater part of their programmes from those companies already established, such as Granada and ATV.[41]

In other words, such companies' opportunities for profit-making would be all the greater. This was particularly so in the case of ATV, which had developed interests in production for television. The onset of ATV's profitability in 1958 allowed it to begin to expand massively into this area, and others. In September 1958, it announced the formation of a 'fifty-fifty partnership' with an American film-making and distribution company.

> A spokesman said that the development would mean large-scale television film production in Britain and ensure big dollar earnings. Mr. Val Parnell, managing director [of the new company] said: 'This deal means dollars for Britain – and when I say dollars, I mean dollars by the million'.[42]

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[39] Much later, Bernard Sendall was to write that the ITA had thought that 'the buying and selling of programmes [would be] much less stable and systematic than it turned out to be' Sendall, *ITV in Britain, vol.1*, p. 304.
[40] CPA: CRD 2/20/13, Minutes of the Conservative Parliamentary Party Broadcasting and Communications Committee, November 17, 1958.
[41] CPA: CRD 2/20/15, Letter from Bellairs to Sir Robert Grimston, M.P., November 25, 1958, quoting 'Prospects for Television' (London: PEP, 1958).
[42] *The Manchester Guardian,* 17 September, 1958.

The following month, after it had bought a British record company, ATV was reportedly on the way to becoming 'one of the biggest show business organizations in the world'.[43] In September, the Financial Times wrote that 'the group's best prospects for substantial progress in the future lie very much in its successful subsidiaries'.[44] Norman Collins, ATV's Deputy Chairman, told the Conservative backbench committee in March 1960 that:

> It would be possible for ITV to provide a third service out of existing profits of the contracting companies without any increase in the licence fee or any call on public funds ... it would break the present monopoly ... and bring the profits of the companies more into line with those in other major industries.[45]

We can assume that he had in mind the profitable market a second commercial channel would create for ATV's programme-making subsidiaries.

Doubtless, many Conservatives took heart from ATV spokesmen's public determination to have their monopoly ended. They were anti-monopolists, too, especially where the BBC was concerned. Sir Robert Grimston's valedictory speech as Chairman of the backbench committee after the 1959 election recalled

> how Sir John Reith had confirmed their fears about increasing left-wing influence in the Corporation at a meeting of the 1922 Committee in the 1930s. It had taken them six (sic) years to break the BBC monopoly, which they now had to break on the commercial side as well.[46]

But the campaign was severely weakened by one crucial fact. None of the other ITV companies wanted their monopolies broken. None, in fact, with the partial exception of Granada, had the show business connections of ATV and none had created programme-making subsidiaries to anything like the same degree. Another letter from Bellairs to Grimston had drawn the latter's attention to a speech by John Spencer Wills, the Chairman of Associated Rediffusion, in November 1958. Wills had made his way in life by helping to run Yorkshire bus companies. His attitude to television was highly pragmatic.[47] There simply wasn't enough material or talent for a third or fourth channel to match the others, especially not in peak time.

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[43] *The Daily Mirror,* 2 October, 1958. Mirror Group newspapers how had a substantial investment in ATV.
[44] *The Financial Times,* 6 September, 1960. In 1981, the I.B.A., as it then was, declined to renew ATV's franchise, despite its three Queen's Awards for Exports, largely on the grounds of its long history of producing evidently 'mid-Atlantic' programming. See Richard Collins, Nicholas Garnham, and Gareth Locksley, *The Economics of Television: The UK Case* (London: Sage, 1988), p. 74.
[45] CPA: CRD 2/20/13, minutes of meeting, 7 March, 1960.
[46] CPA: CRD 2/20/13, minutes of meeting, 24 November, 1959.
[47] Black, *The Mirror in the Corner*, p.106.

> Although critics may sometimes complain that peak hour programmes are not sufficiently 'high brow', a great deal of work by very talented people goes into them ...anyone connected with the existing services knows only too well how difficult it already is to find the right material and talent in sufficient quantity ... it cannot be in the public interest to create one or more similar services to share in the limited resources.

If there were to be additional services, he continued, they should be 'solely' for 'educational' and 'specialised' programmes for 'minorities', in which his company would participate 'notwithstanding that it would have to be subsidised by our present service'. [48] In other words, not only would Associated Rediffusion retain its monopoly in selling advertising around entertainment television in its lucrative transmission area (London, Monday to Friday) but such 'educational' and 'specialised' programmes as it did transmit could be hived off to a separate channel, allowing more airspace for profitable transmissions carrying advertising on the original channel. Perhaps Bellairs did wish to draw the anti-monopolist Grimston's attention to this, perhaps not. In any case, he limited his comments to how the speech bore out Marples' fear that any new services in ITV would have to take 'a very large part of their material' from the companies already established. Clearly, this was a hint that the commercial television companies would not all be the Conservatives' allies if it came to breaking the monopoly 'on the commercial side'.

(v): **Courting the Malvolio vote: The 1959 Election and after**

In June, 1959, Hugh Gaitskell was interviewed in the London Evening Standard on the Labour Party's attitude to commercial television, which, in 1954, it had promised to abolish. He would not now wish to do so, he said, because of the network's general acceptance by the public, although he would have preferred 'a second public service television corporation with a pay-as-you-go system'. The ITA should be more in control, he thought.

> But commercial television is popular with lots of people and we must recognise that it has come to stay, at least in some form. What we must do, however, as a minimum, is to make sure that the safeguards intended in the Television Act are properly administered and observed. [49]

Bellairs circulated his Committee members with a copy of this interview, and followed it up later with a note warning Michael Fraser that Marples was thinking 'very much along the same lines' in suggesting that more power should be given to the ITA, and that 'to attack [that idea] now

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[48] CPA: CRD 2/20/15, letter from Bellairs to Grimston, 27 November, 1958.
[49] *Evening Standard*, June 12, 1959.

might make us look very foolish in the future'.[50] But the party leadership was then still anxious to take the credit for ITV's popularity, if uncertain about the future, as can be seen in the draft minutes of a meeting of the so-called Conservative Steering Committee, which has been already cited.[51] This body comprised Macmillan, Butler, Macleod, Heath, Lords Home and Hailsham, and Oliver Poole, Peter Goldman and Michael Fraser from Central Office. It was meeting regularly in Downing St. to prepare the manifesto for the forthcoming election. On June 26 it turned its attention to a section of an existing draft headed 'Leisure and Recreation'. That read: 'By 1965 virtually the whole country will be reached by BBC and commercial television programmes: an independent inquiry will be established to advise the terms and conditions on which they should both continue' [52], opening up the possibility that the 'terms and conditions' under which the BBC operated might be changed dramatically.

Macmillan opened the discussion by saying that a 'great number of the laws and restrictions [were] framed in a more primitive society (he clearly had gaming and drinking laws in mind), and so were based on a mistrust of what the people would do. But like children growing up, we can all now be trusted to do more of what is right'.

Heath declared that 'the party in the House is very apprehensive about Sunday observance'. The Chief Whip was obviously aware that there were traditionalists as well as modernisers among Conservative backbenchers.

The point seemed to strike home with Macmillan, who sought to express his concerns with a metaphor drawn from Shakespeare. 'I think we have got all the Toby Belch votes', he is reported as musing 'and I am rather frightened of the Malvolio vote'.

The dilemma of the modern Conservative Party was thus neatly defined; if the party was to appeal to consumers of cakes and ale, and working-class ITV viewers, it could not forget that it also depended on the Malvolio vote. That can be thought of as the vote of those who believed in decorum and moderation, and abhorred the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake, conservatives with a small 'c', more or less puritanical in spirit, convinced, many of them, that they knew what was best for others better than they knew themselves (even if the more austere and intellectual

[50] CPA: CRD 2/20/15, note from Bellairs to Fraser, September 19, 1959.
[51] CPA: CRD 2/53/34, rough draft of minutes of Steering Committee, June 26, 1959. The previous citation is on pp.2-3.
[52] CPA: CRD 2/53/32, SC/44.

among them were often drawn to the Labour Party). Many would be Gorer's 'abstainers'. If not, they would most likely be BBC viewers, and few would be likely to admit to watching ITV regularly. Politically, the Conservative Party identified with ITV; socially, with the BBC..

Heath picked up the significance of Macmillan's remark for the debate over television. 'Couldn't we put something more definite in on the ITA?', he asked, 'and need we have this bit about an independent inquiry?' The clear implication was that those pro-BBC viewers among Conservative voters would need reassuring.

Poole spoke up for the Toby Belch vote in the quote already given. 'Whether we like it or not', he said, and clearly some did not, 'commercial television is by far the most popular and important thing we have done'.

There is no record of this claim being questioned. Instead, Macmillan seems to have swung away from Malvolio, and towards Belch.

> Start [the section on Liberty] by saying: we have now an absolutely new situation in the life of the people – the life they lead. The whole country has television and radio sets. We brought in ITV against tremendous opposition, and we shall certainly not abolish it, which apparently the Socialists are pledged to do. (Don't think we want to mention the terms on which they shall continue.) ... Conservative tradition is to trust the people. Against all the highbrows, the Times newspaper, the Archbishops, ...and the Lord President, we gave you ITV. And now who is going to try and take it away from you? We will keep it.

The Lord President of the Council at the time, seated at the table, was Lord Hailsham. Did Macmillan mean to portray him as the pious, puritanical and vain Malvolio? The minutes of the meeting record Hailsham as saying nothing. But the next draft of this section included none of Macmillan's rhetoric. Instead, it read only as follows: 'Every other family now has TV...only under a Conservative Government is it certain that the free choice we brought into television will remain.'[53]

From the summer of 1957, Hailsham had taken over as Chairman of the Party, effectively demoting Poole who became his Deputy, and had established himself as a significant figure by restoring party morale from its 1957 low. Unlike Poole, he was to be an important face of the

[53] CPA: CRD 2/53/34, SC/50

party in the 1959 campaign.[54] The battle over this section of the manifesto seems to have been one that Macmillan (and Poole) could allow Hailsham to win.

Highbrows, readers of *The Times*, Archbishops and Malvolios could be reassured that the reference to 'free choice' rather than simply 'keeping ITV' implied that the BBC would also remain in existence, and, further, that its importance as 'the main instrument of broadcasting' would, very likely, be respected. But the manifesto, when actually published as 'The Next Five Years' failed to include even that. Despite Poole's (and Macmillan's) desire to take the credit for having established ITV, it does not appear. The only mention of the word 'television' is in a section on affluence, where the claim is that, as well as there being increased car ownership and more people taking holidays away from home, 'two out of every three families now have TV' (revised upwards from the previous figure).[55] There is nothing to suggest any implicit or explicit threat to the BBC, nor even a pledge to at least maintain ITV and 'free choice'.

Mark Jarvis has recently provided an account of this meeting which comes to a very different conclusion. His view is that it was 'highly significant' that television was mentioned in the section on 'The Use of Leisure'.

> The Tories had delivered economic affluence and were now incorporating the fruits of this into updating social life. Macmillan, the adept and wily politician, certainly knew how to exploit the economic feel-good factor, and inextricably linked commercial television, leisure and the modernisation of social laws into a series of pledges to win popular support in the election of 1959.[56]

Jarvis is able to argue this case only because he has used the evidence selectively. He fails to make any mention of or any reference at all to Macmillan's remark about 'the Malvolio vote', and the clear implication it contains that Macmillan was determined not to lose traditionalist and small-c conservative support. Nor does Jarvis offer any explanation for the surely more significant absence in the manifesto of the rhetoric Macmillan had used about giving the people ITV, which he does quote. It is also notable that, far from being 'inextricably linked' to any series of pledges, the words 'commercial television' and 'independent television' appear nowhere in the

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[54] John Ramsden, *The Winds of Change: Macmillan to Heath, 1957-1975* (London: Longman, 1996), p.49
[55] The Conservative Party, *The Next Five Years: the Conservative Manifesto for the General Election of 1959* (London: The Conservative Party, 1959).
[56] Jarvis, *Conservative Governments in Affluent Britain*, p.129

manifesto. The evidence seems to suggests that the Tory leadership felt that this was an area best left unexplored for fear of losing support.[57]

In the event, the future of broadcasting was to play little or no part in the election, not figuring at all in Gallup Poll listings of the issues considered most important.[58] Nine days before polling, the *Daily Sketch* ran a story implying that a future Labour government would abolish ITV. That day, Bellairs wrote to Fraser to warn that this report 'should be treated with the utmost caution'. The Labour Party had made it clear, he said, that they had no such intention.

> What the Socialists would probably do is to adopt a very strict attitude towards advertising, and at the same time cut down the profits of the programme contracting companies. This may or may not be good policy, but it would certainly not worry the general public so long as the programmes continued.[59]

(vi): **The Search for a Conservative Policy**

After the election, the Conservative backbench broadcasting committee continued the quest for a suitable policy on television. Their first meeting in 1960 was addressed by Dan Ingman, a director of the American-based advertising agency, Young and Rubicam.. He told them that he was 'concerned' about 'the present monopolistic conditions prevailing in television advertising', with the various companies 'working in such close uniformity on the question of rates, etc., that there was really no effective competition at all'. 'Would there be a sufficiency of advertising to cover a third television service?', he was asked. 'Most certainly', he answered. There was also some interest in the possibility of the BBC being funded by advertising. 'Would that be supported by advertisers?' he was asked. 'Yes', he replied, 'provided that the BBC did not regard the advertisements purely as a fund-raising nuisance'.[60]

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[57] Dr. Peter Catterall has also made the point that it is clear from the nearly complete absence of mentions of television in the Macmillan diaries how uninterested in it he really was - either in its programmes or its policies.

[58] They were, in descending order: Cost of living and prices, pensions, employment, production/expansion, housing and rents, summit meetings, the H-Bomb, and education. See D.E. Butler and Richard Rose, *The British General Election of 1959* (London: Macmillan, 1960), p.71. Curiously, the writers attribute what they report as 'the surprising increase in attendances at public meetings' during the campaign, particularly Labour ones, to the influence of television: 'voters having watched politicians through the cathode-ray tube wanted to see and question them in the flesh ... by 1959 the total audience for the regular weekly political discussion programmes was between 35 and 40 million' (pp.96 & 136). The future of television is not mentioned in the book as issue in the campaign.

[59] CPA: CRD 2/20/15, letter from Bellairs to Fraser, October 6 1959

[60] CPA: CRD 2/20/13, minutes of meeting, February 1, 1960.

Throughout the first part of 1960, a succession of broadcasting notables addressed the Committee. Robert Fraser made a case in February for the ITA to be given the responsibility for running the third service, which 'should earn its living through advertising rather than be dependent on public funds'. If it went to the BBC, that would cost more for the licence-fee payer and the taxpayer without reducing the companies' profits. If it was financed through advertising but administered by a separate body from the ITA, the two channels would compete for audiences and for revenue, and 'it would probably mean that whenever ITV presented a serious programme, the new service would put on a mass appeal programme at the same time'. In other words, giving the third service to the ITA would not only satisfy an anti-BBC and anti-monopolist ideology, it could guarantee that 'serious' programmes would appear on two ITA channels. [61] It would also of course mean that, if a company spent a large sum on a 'mass appeal' programme, it would not have to compete with another such programme on the other ITA channel.

Norman Collins came, as we have seen, in March, to offer to end his company's monopoly; [62] Sir Hugh Carleton Greene, the new Director-General of the BBC, came the following week, to make a case, as uncontentiously as he could, for BBC local radio.[63] Greene was asked whether the BBC would accept advertising. The Corporation had thought 'very carefully' about it, he replied, but it did not wish to become dependent on advertisers, and 'there was some evidence that a large number of people disliked [the] advertisements.' Would the BBC need an increase in the licence fee to pay for local radio and a second television service? No, if the Government gave it all of the £4 it collected, including the excise duty.[64] '£4 would be enough for the first few years'. In other words, as he was forced to admit, there *would* be a charge on public funds in that the Treasury would lose revenue from the excise duty.

The meeting in May addressed by Paul Adorian, Managing Director of Associated Rediffusion, caused the most open contention. Adorian was an engineer, and an expert in electronics; public

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[61] CPA: CRD 2/20/13, minutes of meeting, February 22, 1960.
[62] CPA: CRD 2/20/13, minutes of meeting, March 7, 1960.
[63] CPA: CRD 2/20/13, minutes of meeting March 14, 1960. Sir Arthur fforde, the BBC's Chairman, and Sir Ian Jacob, Greene's predecessor, had been given an uncomfortable time at a meeting in December 1958, at which, according to Bellairs' account to Fraser, 'they seemed to rather resent some of the questions put to them', one of which was whether the aim of broadcasting should be to provide not what people were thought to need but what they want'. (The answer was that 'people often did not know whether they would like a particular item until they had seen it'). (CPA: CRD 2/20/13, minutes of meeting December 8, 1958; Bellairs to Fraser, December 11, 1958).
[64] see p. 3 above, n.14.

relations was not a particular strength.[65] Clearly, he shared the views of his Chairman on the weak case for any third service. First, he bluntly told the meeting, ITV profits were not excessive.[66] Secondly, there was no shortage of advertising space; it was always available outside peak hours, and at any time during the summer. Additionally, the BBC was becoming more competitive, latest figures showing a 68%/32% split between ITV and the BBC. 'He hoped the BBC would improve further, to around 40%, as this would make for healthier competition'. A higher priority should be given to those areas of the country which still could only receive the BBC, or which had no reception at all, than to providing a new service.

He was then asked if he didn't agree that 'more competition might well improve the service and bring down advertising rates'. Unsurprisingly, he didn't.

> As there were only a given number of viewers, any additional service would obtain its audience by reducing the audiences of the existing services. At the same time, the same amount of advertising would have to support a second service, with the result that the general quality of programmes would be reduced all round.

It may have been clear that Adorian's company, and probably most of the others wanted the third channel to go to the BBC, as that would mean they could hang on to their profitable monopolies. The public debate, however, tended to see the issue as a war between the BBC and ITV, following which the victor would be awarded the trophy of a second channel.

It was in connection with just such a debate that Fergus Montgomery M.P. wrote a letter to Michael Fraser in January 1960, which has already been quoted, for help with a speech defending a resolution that the BBC should be awarded this precious trophy.[67] Bellairs replied. It is worth giving further extracts from his letter, because it puts the case for BBC2 as well as it was ever put in advance of the Pilkington Report, and, moreover, because it shows clearly the sort of Conservative thinking on which Pilkington could draw, and the basis on a which a cross-party pro-BBC alliance could be formed. He wrote:

> To my mind the most convincing argument in favour of the BBC concerns the programme content of television ... It may well have been right to break the BBC's monopoly in this important field. And on the whole the results have not been all that unsatisfactory. Generally speaking ...it is fair to say that ITV tends to chase the mass audience for the simple reason that their advertisements

[65] Sendall, *ITV in Britain,* vol. 1, p.116; Black, *The Mirror in the Corner*, p. 197.
[66] CPA: CRD 2/20/13, minutes of meeting May 2, 1960. Later Bellairs circulated a correction to the minutes; profit figures Adorian had given had to be revised upwards (undated circular from Bellairs to Committee members).
[67] CPA: CRD 2/20/15, letter from Fergus Montgomery to Fraser, January 20, 1960.

> are seen and heard by as many people as possible. The BBC has tended on the whole to carry on much as before, although occasionally I would say that the stimulus of competition has done some good. It is no bad thing to have one channel devoted to the attraction of mass audiences, but ought we to have more than one channel devoted to this purpose? For there are good reasons for thinking that so long as the money for the programmes is found by advertisers, the chasing of the mass audience is inevitable. If however the third service was given to the BBC, it is arguable that the Corporation would have an excellent opportunity of providing a genuine alternative service, which, while naturally containing some items of universal appeal, would be able to pay more attention to minority tastes - something which, for obvious reasons, the two existing channels find it difficult to do. In addition, there are a large number of people who, while they appreciate the necessity for advertisements ... are quite frankly not too keen on having them mixed up with their television entertainment ... I have heard [them] described as "nothing but an infernal nuisance" when they interrupt plays etc, at so-called 'natural breaks' - incidentally, I have yet to hear what the definition of a 'natural break' is. [68]

Other indications of Conservative support for the BBC around this time were gleefully reported by Tom Driberg, a veteran leftist of upper-class origin, who wrote television criticism in the *New Statesman*.

> The Northern Conservative Women's Advisory Committee has passed, by the overwhelming majority of 200 to 6 a resolution urging the Government to consider immediately granting the BBC a licence to run the third network.

And there was more.

> The Oxford Union's debate on the same subject resulted in a smashing defeat for ITV, even though its present tone is predominantly Tory ... It seems that Mr. Mayhew ... brought the house down by flourishing two white handkerchiefs, one washed in Daz, the other in another well-known product, and challenging his opponent Norman Collins to distinguish between them.[69]

But as Bellairs was writing his letter, he was becoming involved as one of two Secretaries to another Party committee which was to make the opposite recommendation. In December 1959, Fraser had asked him to suggest names to sit on an 'ad hoc policy group on the future of broadcasting'. Bellairs put forward several names.

> I have tried to suggest people (especially MPs) with a reasonably open mind; as you know, this is not altogether easy as so many of our Members who take an interest in broadcasting have their minds already made up on the subject, the majority of them favouring the extension of advertising into sound broadcasting.[70]

In the end, it was a high-powered group with considerable media experience. It consisted of Rawlinson, who was to become Attorney-General, three other MPs who were Geoffrey Johnson-

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[68] CPA: CRD 2/20/15, letter from Bellairs to Montgomery, January 22, 1960. Bellairs had changed his mind considerably – or had he? – from the position he took in 1958 in the paper he wrote then on 'competitive television'. See p. 36, above.

[69] *The New Statesman*, February 27, 1960.

[70] CPA: CRD 2/20/15, letter from Bellairs to Fraser, December 29, 1959. The Committee was to report to the Advisory Committee on Policy at Central Office which was chaired by Butler from 1945 to 1965.

Smith, who had recently been a star of BBC TV's *Tonight*, William Deedes M.P., who was to become a Cabinet Minister and edit the *Daily Telegraph*, and Lady Tweedsmuir, described as a 'public relations consultant'. Other members were Brian Connell, presenter of Associated Rediffusion's *This Week*, then the most highly-regarded current affairs programme on ITV, Howell Thomas, 'a former theatrical manager', now Radio and Television Liaison Officer at Central Office, and Dennis Walters, who was to become an M.P., described as a 'public relations executive'. Its Chairman was Sir Eric Edwards, a provincial solicitor, who was Chairman of the National Union Executive Committee, later to be ennobled as Lord Chelmer. [71]

Whether Butler and others were aware that the Edwards Committee's work would be overtaken by the Government's own Inquiry is unclear. There must be some suspicion that its appointment was another attempt at 'stalling', this time to pre-empt anti-BBC militants in the Party demanding precipitate action. The Committee, however, set to work willingly enough. By May 1960, Fraser reported that it had had twelve meetings 'and had taken a great deal of evidence from representatives of interested bodies'. According to Lady Tweedsmuir, 'the Committee were now getting down to sorting out their ideas'. [72] In July, Sir Eric reported that they would have reached agreement on television by their next meeting, and 'would then have to finalise their views on sound broadcasting'.[73] Eight days later, the appointment of the Pilkington Committee was announced. Edwards carried on working. His Committee's Report was ready in November. By then, Conservative support for any decision that would mean an increase in the licence fee was looking unlikely. J.D. Camacho, the BBC's Editor, Current Affairs, Sound, reported privately to the Director-General from that year's Scarborough Conference that delegates and MPs all assumed that 'it was unthinkable to increase the licence fee in the interests of the BBC'.[74]

The Edwards Committee declared that they did *not* believe that 'all television is bad, and commercial television is worse'. That was a minority view, they said. It was easy to mock it, 'but

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[71] Conservative Party Archive, Conservative Advisory Committee (hereafter ACP) 3/7 (60) 83, *The Future of Broadcasting*, published as: (i) Sir Eric Edwards and others, *Broadcasting: The Next Steps* (London: Conservative Political Centre, 1960) and (ii), in shortened form, as 'Submission by an Independent Group of Conservatives' in *Report of the Committee on Broadcasting 1960, Cmnd. 1819, Vol. II, Appendix E, Memoranda submitted to the Committee, Paper 251* (London: HMSO, 1962) pp.1173-1190. Edwards had made himself useful to Butler some months earlier when he had dealt on Butler's behalf with a local constituency party which was making embarrassing demands for the return of flogging. See Butler papers, H40/83, letter from Butler to Edwards, July 10, 1959.

[72] CPA: ACP (60), minutes of meeting, May 18, 1960.

[73] CPA: ACP (60), minutes of meeting, July 6, 1960.

[74] BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham (hereafter BBC WAC): R4/46/1, note from J.D. Camacho to the D-G, October 17, 1960.

we have felt it more appropriate to attempt constructively to mollify (sic) it'. To establish their position, they found inspiration in J.K.Galbraith's *The Affluent Society*, then a prime influence on a variety of left-wing thinkers.[75] Galbraith had written:

> In a well-run and well-regulated community ...where public services have kept pace with modern production ... television and the violent morals of Hollywood and Madison Avenue must contend with the intellectual discipline of the school.

In his native America, Hollywood and the advertising industry were winning.

> In a community where public services have failed to keep abreast of private consumption ... in an atmosphere of private opulence and public squalor, the private goods have full sway. Schools do not compete with television and the movies ... the dubious heroes of the latter become the idols of the young.[76]

There is a chilling reference to a concomitant increase in 'comic books, alcohol, narcotics and switchblades'. 'That', said the Committee, 'seems to touch the heart of the matter'. In Britain things were not quite so bad as in America. But there was no room for complacency.

> In the light of the present crime wave amongst young people ... we feel strongly that neither the BBC nor the ITA have done all they should to avoid the showing of horror, violence or sex for its own sake ... we detect signs of growing public feeling on the subject of unsuitable programmes, which producers would do well to heed'.[77]

There was a clear implication that they *would* heed it if they knew what was best for them. And if young people were not behaving the way they should, then the only alternatives were to restrain television's growth, which should not be attempted (for reasons they did not give but, presumably, so as not to interfere further with the market), or by fostering 'healthier forces', partly by expanding education and youth services, and partly through the management of television and its content.

First, there should unquestionably be a third national service, as soon as practicable. 'All three programme [services] should contain a proper balance in themselves', so that each would consist of popular programmes and minority programmes side by side. A surprising suggestion was that '[individual] programmes should not be labelled in advance', so that viewers might unexpectedly

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[75] Lawrence Black has written that it 'conformed to traditional socialist thinking, but carried the fight to the enemy on the battlefield of affluence'. Black, *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain, 1951-64* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2003), p.92.

[76] J.K. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1958), quoted in CPA: ACP 3/7 (60) 83, p. 4.; *Cmnd. 1819,* p. 1176/77. The order of some passages is reversed in the version printed in *Cmnd.1918.* I can discern no rationale for this.

[77] *Cmnd. 1819,* p. 1174.

come across material on, say, birdlife, or archaeology, by accident, and then find that they liked them. Thus, the healthy forces of which the Committee approved would be fostered, and, it was expected, the various 'dubious heroes' of television and the cinema would lose their appeal.[78]

To some extent, this already was the Reithian practice of BBC Television, although BBC programmes *had* always been labelled in advance. However improbable and naïve, the proposal was that three very similar television channels might be constituted like the two 'balanced' pre-war radio services, the 'National' and the 'Regional', a pattern abandoned in wartime, when the Forces Programme was introduced, and then for good in 1945, when it was re-named the Light Programme [79]. But it was not followed by a recommendation that the third channel should go to the BBC. The section abruptly ends:

> To finance a second service out of public funds would mean either an increase in licence fees – probably a substantial one – or a Government grant. We are opposed to either of these methods being used now to pay for another television service.[80]

Clearly, there was not widespread Conservative support for the BBC after all, if it meant increasing the licence fee. The Edwards Committee went on to stress that it was equally opposed to pay-as-you-view, or to an increase in the transmitter rentals paid by ITV. The additional service was to be funded by advertising, and run by a 'greatly strengthened' Authority. There would be an Executive Director for each network, appointed by the ITA, and the two would compete with each other to ensure 'high quality' and 'proper balance' in their respective services.[81]

These recommendations may now be seen to anticipate those the Pilkington Committee was to make. But the Committee had another proposal, which went even further. This was that news and current affairs programmes, which all companies on both channels would be obliged to show, should be produced not by the ITV companies, but, 'under the general umbrella of the ITA', by a

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[78] *Cmnd. 1819,* p. 1177.
[79] Peter Black, *The Biggest Aspidistra in the World: A Personal Celebration of Fifty Years of the BBC* (London: BBC, 1972), pp. 172/173.
[80] *Cmnd. 1819,* p. 1179.
[81] No mention is made of any restrictions in the way individual programmes are to be sourced. By February the following year, addressing a meeting of the backbench committee, Sir Eric had spotted the omission. 'The contracting companies', he said 'must be completely independent from those operating the present service'. See *Cmnd. 1819,* pp. 1179-82 and CPA: CRD 2/20/13, minutes of meeting, February 8, 1961.

special production unit financed by all of them, with a third Executive Director appointed by the ITA to run it.[82]

As for radio, the BBC had no monopoly in this area, said the Report, as even 'the most modest radio set' can pick up commercial stations beamed into Britain from abroad. The authors clearly had Radio Luxemburg in mind. Further,

> experience of [local commercial radio] is not encouraging, for the programmes put out consist for the most part of recorded light music interrupted every so often by news flashes. Those who enjoy light music are already well catered for by the BBC's Light Programme.[83]

No ideological conviction in favour of competition - or belief in people's right to choose what they wanted to listen to - would lead them to support advertising-funded radio. [84] It may be recalled that Conservatives in favour of commercial radio were likely to have been excluded from the Committee.

Sir Eric's report was presented to the Advisory Committee early in November, 1960, and a decision was taken to publish it as a pamphlet by the Conservative Political Centre, and, in line with past practice, that would not commit the Party to its views. The Pilkington Committee had started work. Henry Brooke, who was among the few Ministers present, felt that the Pilkington Committee 'must not... be given the impression that the Government ...had already made up its mind. [85]

On publication in December, the Report's foreword insisted that it did not commit the Party or the Government in any way. It was, it declared an entirely personal... contribution by a group of eight prominent Conservatives. [86] No question, then, of them having been hand-picked by Central Office, and serviced by Central Office employees. The leadership was still stalling.

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[82] *Cmnd. 1819,* p. 1181.
[83] *Cmnd. 1819,* p. 1189.
[84] In regard to radio, the Committee may have been influenced by lobbying from the Newspaper Society: a Conservative M.P. reported that he had met representatives of local newspaper interests who had insisted that local commercial radio stations should not be allowed, unless local newspapers in their area could have at least majority shareholdings. CPA: CRD 2/20/15, memorandum to Committee members from Philip Goodhart M.P., September 7, 1960.
[85] CPA: ACP (60), minutes of meeting, November 9, 1960.
[86] Edwards and others, *Broadcasting: The Next Steps* , p. (i).

(vii): **The Independent Television Authority, its Critics and the Critics of Television**

As we have seen, the ITV system set up by the 1954 Act was a compromise. Many of those who objected to commercial television were initially placated, as John Corner notes, by the creation of the ITA, which, he claims, 'closely resembled the BBC', and 'conferred an immediate aura of responsibility and institutional rectitude'.[87] One of the ITA's official historians came to speak of 'an arranged marriage' with private enterprise. ITV, it was declared, was, from the start, not really commercial, but 'semi-commercial'.[88]

Its first Chairman was the art historian Sir Kenneth Clark, Chairman of the Arts Council.[89] Sendall quotes him as declaring, at the start, that 'commercial television might add some element of vital vulgarity which is not without its value'.[90] But he was to become disenchanted with television's vulgarity, and to lose patience with his colleague Fraser. As a conversation with May O'Conor was reported in an internal BBC document.

> She expressed her by-now familiar disillusionment with the ITA and said how supine she thought it was as a governing body. Sir Kenneth apparently said that he agreed with her. She said that she particularly disliked Sir Robert Fraser. Sir Kenneth then said that Fraser had become a sort of 'Public Relations Officer' for the companies and that he, Clark, had grown tired of Fraser's repeated requests to him to treat the companies more sympathetically. In talking about programmes, Sir Kenneth agreed that ITV programmes were 'so awful', but did not think that the BBC's were much better.[91]

On the announcement of Clark's decision to resign in June 1957, a wary Ernest Marples sought a very different figure as Clark's replacement. He minuted the Prime Minister:

> The qualities needed to run the ITA are not the same as for the BBC. The programme companies are run by ruthless and tough men in show business. They need a tactful but firm Chairman.[92]

He proposed three names: Sir John Hunt, who had led the first party to climb Everest, A.V. Bridgland, 'a tough Australian businessman', and Professor Arnold Plant from the LSE. In Downing St, civil servants then came up with a list of fourteen names, and a lengthy selection

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[87] John Corner, 'Introduction' in *Popular Television in Britain*, p. 5.
[88] Jeremy Potter, *Independent Television in Britain, vol.3*, p. 2.
[89] He was later to become known as Lord Clark 'of Civilisation' after presenting a much-admired but little-watched series in 1969 on BBC2. According to Briggs, the series 'broke no viewing records, and quotes Clark's own observation that programmes he made for ATV in 1960, after leaving the ITA, had had more viewers. See Briggs, *History* vol. 5, p. 612.
[90] Sendall, *ITV in Britain*, vol. 1, p. 60.
[91] BBC WAC: R4/46/2, note from Colin Shaw to Harman Grisewood, November 7 1960. Miss O'Conor, a local politician in the Isle of Wight, was chairing a joint BBC/ITV Committee on children and television.
[92] TNA: CAB 21/4725, PMG to the Prime Minister, June 6, 1957.

procedure ensued.[93] Towards the end of August the name of Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick came up as one of five new possibilities, but it was November before he was offered and took the job.[94] He was to hold it for five years. An ex-professional soldier, an ex-diplomat, most recently Head of the Foreign Office, he had been one of Gorer's 'abstainers'. He was 'a new viewer', as he told the newspapers.

> I have recently been watching quite a lot of programmes, some of which I like, particularly the plays. If I were to name any I don't like, I would say the quiz programmes. They do not amuse me.[95]

Sendall says that he was 'courteous, but moody and sometimes decidedly curt'.[96] Within a few months Kirkpatrick was to demonstrate that he had gone native; at least that he was speaking the same language as 'the tough men in show business', and no less prepared than Fraser to speak for them. The companies were asking for permitted hours of broadcasting to be increased. Diana Reader Harris, the Headmistress of Sherborne School for Girls, a member of the ITA who, like others, might equally have graced the BBC Board of Governors, asked at a meeting of the Authority in June 1958 why they should support the companies' claim. If they did, and the BBC followed suit, 'there was a danger that standards on both services would decline'. More would mean worse.

Kirkpatrick assured her that there was no question of the Authority attempting, at this stage, to bring pressure to bear on an unwilling government. But, anyway, he said,

> the facilities for producing additional programmes were available to the companies and they were anxious to put on additional programmes, and there seemed no reason therefore in a free society why they should not be allowed to do so.

The companies had proposed that they should pay less per hour in rental for any extra hours. Fraser approved. Kirkpatrick wanted to save them even more money. The companies, he pointed out, were all making charitable donations to the arts. As a result of that, he thought, they could be

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[93] The civil servants' list included only Bridgland of the above three, and several ex-politicians, all Conservative. It was said that 'it seems most unlikely that the Prime Minister would be able to persuade anybody who was not a Conservative to take this on'. Civil servants and Ministers between them then suggested another eleven names; the job seems to have been offered and declined more than once. TNA: CAB 21/4725, David Stephens to Sir Norman Brook, June 27, 1957.

[94] TNA: CAB 21/4725, Sir Norman Brook to the Prime Minister, July 1, 1957, dismissing the Australian: 'I gather his reputation is not very good [...] he would not be asked to join the Board of the highest class of company'; Stephens to Brook, July 4; other minutes dated July 5, August 6, August 29 (first mention of Kirkpatrick), and September 3 (with two new names suggested).

[95] *The News Chronicle,* November 9, 1957.

[96] Sendall, *ITV in Britain, vol. 2*, p. xiii.

allowed a reduction of £50,000 in the additional rental they would pay for any additional transmission hours. There is no record that the members of the Authority charged the Chairman with driving a hard bargain, or enforcing any future commitments on the companies. They, simply, agreed.[97]

The Authority may well have seemed 'supine' over another financial issue the following year. In 1959, because of the level of profits, the Authority came under pressure from the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee to examine a possible increase in transmitter rentals.[98] At a meeting in January, ATV had said they were 'very worried' about that possibility because of the general inflation they were expecting in their costs.[99] The minutes of a meeting in March declare baldly that Kirkpatrick had been discussing this with the Chairmen of the big four companies, and that they had suggested that the money from any increase in rentals could be held in the companies' own reserves (presumably earning them interest) until the Authority urgently needed it, e.g. for technical improvements in transmission systems (which the Authority owned). 'The Chairman said that he had given the companies no grounds to believe the Authority would favour such a proposal'.[100] It may seem remarkable in that case that the companies could have been bold enough to suggest it. The Authority elected, anyway, to deny the Public Accounts Committee any increase in rentals.

It was an article of faith of the left-wing critics of ITV, irritated by the wholly unapologetic stance taken by Fraser in his frequent public statements, that it was 'weakness and indolence' on the part of the ITA, and of successive Ministers, that had enabled the companies 'to make millions of pounds at the viewers' expense by evasion of the [Television]Act'. That argument was in a 1959 Fabian Tract by Christopher Mayhew, the Labour M.P. who had been a leader of the original campaign against commercial television.[101] As well as savaging the general run of ITV programmes, the pamphlet expressed a concern for children. 'It is quite reasonable to suppose'

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[97] BFI ITC: ITA Minutes, 93 (58), meeting June 3, 1958.
[98] For an account of this, see Sendall, 1982, pp. 293-299.
[99] BFI ITC: ITA minutes, (103) 58, meeting January 13, 1959. ATV's profits for 1958/59 were £5,316,493, and only slightly up in 1959/60 to £5,388,330. *The Financial Times,* July 29, 1960. Also see pp.2/3, and p. 9, above.
[100] BFI ITC: ITA minutes, 105 (59), meeting March 3, 1959.
[101] Christopher Mayhew, *Commercial Television – What is to be Done?* (London: The Fabian Society, 1959), p. 9.

Mayhew declared 'that a child's mind is influenced for the worse by a diet of American films of violence'.[102]

His preferred solution was the one to be adopted by the Pilkington Committee nearly three years later. Like the Conservatives who were to report at the end of 1960 (without mentioning his pamphlet), he wished to strengthen the ITA. A beginning could be made with its personnel.

> Then the [1954] Act could be amended so as to give the Authority, instead of the programme companies, the right to sell advertising time and to plan the network programmes. The Authority would then receive all the advertising revenue itself and would simply contract for the network programmes from the companies.[103]

One advantage of this, he wrote, was that the Authority would be free 'to schedule popular minority programmes in normal viewing hours'. As for the third channel, it should perhaps, he thought, go to a new public corporation, financed by pay-as-you-view, or by subsidy from ITV.

But his immediate concern was with the ITA's flexibility over the concept of the 'natural break', the term used in the 1954 Act to allow for advertising to be inserted in the middle of programmes, as well as with the overall amount of advertising being shown, which, as we have seen, many Conservatives were also finding objectionable.

Earlier that year, in January, Mayhew, along with another Labour M.P., Donald Chapman, had, at their request, made a visit to the ITA, and been granted an audience with Kirkpatrick and Fraser. It was clearly not a friendly occasion. As Fraser told the Authority afterwards:

> The difficulty which he [Fraser] had experienced at the meeting was that the two M.P.s were not interested in having a reasonable discussion about matters which were causing them concern, but were intent on extracting what they considered to be damaging admissions about the way the Authority was fulfilling its duties.[104]

Individual Authority members had some sympathy for the critics. At a meeting in 1958, Reader Harris had said that 'a disturbing feature of ITV programmes was their general mediocrity, triviality and lack of originality. The programmes contained little to stimulate the viewer and she instanced the high proportion of give-away programmes'. [105]

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[102] Ibid, p. 15. Calling for more research, the pamphlet admitted that there was no evidence to prove the case.
[103] Ibid, p. 19/20.
[104] BFI: ITC: ITA minutes, (104) 59, meeting February 10, 1959.
[105] BFI ITC: ITA minutes, (101) 58, meeting December 4, 1958.

Now she pointed out that advertising sometimes reached a level of more than eight minutes per hour, contrary to assurances in parliamentary debates that the hourly average would be no more than six minutes, with a maximum of seven in any one hour. This was a weak point in the Authority's case, agreed Kirkpatrick. Nevertheless, he insisted that there was no clear evidence that the amount of advertising was causing general public offence. The 1954 Act had not, in fact, stipulated any maximum. But two other members spoke out. One was Dame Frances Farrer.[106] She had also been critical in the past, declaring that the current pattern of ITV programmes was 'too rigid', and that there were many potential viewers 'for whom the present set pattern of programmes had little appeal'.[107] She now insisted that a maximum of five or six minutes' advertising in the hour had indeed been mentioned in speeches in the House of Commons by government spokesmen. Also, she agreed with Mayhew and Chapman that many of the advertising breaks which were being taken during programmes 'were not natural in the sense which the Act intended'.

Kirkpatrick replied. 'If any move were made to reduce the number of advertising breaks in programmes, it could ... only lead to longer breaks before and after [them]', he insisted. In a well-rehearsed argument, he added that there were intervals in plays in the theatre to which no-one objected. Improvements in the pattern of commercial breaks would only be resolved by experiment, and he'd suggested to the Chairman of Associated Rediffusion that they try out different methods of presenting advertisements. Fraser did not take part in the discussion on this point. Instead, Sendall spoke up. In his view, the criticism coming from people like Mayhew and Chapman 'was stimulating a number of complaints from the public which would not have been made spontaneously'.[108]

Although no lay member of the Authority spoke in defence of the industry's practice, the outside critics seem not to have been aware of the support they had inside the Authority. Nonetheless, the ITA felt obliged to tighten its control over the amount of advertising, and the maximum allowed

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[106] Dame Frances was the daughter of a peer, and was for 30 years the general secretary of the National Federation of Women's' Institutes. She told a writer on a *Guardian* feature page that 'the side of her public life which seems to surprise her the most is 'meeting the tycoons' of commercial television ... 'I have never met that sort of gentleman before' she says.' *The Guardian*, October 5, 1959. The other member to voice criticism was Sir Henry Hinchliffe.

[107] BFI ITC: ITA minutes, (101) 58, meeting December 4, 1958.

[108] Sendall makes no mention of this meeting in either volume of his history. For other similar discussions on the minutage of advertising, see BFI ITC: ITA minutes, 105 (59), meeting March 3, 1959; 121 (60), meeting March 8, 1960; 122 (60), meeting March 22.

in any one 'clock hour' was reduced from eight minutes in 1958/9 to seven minutes by December 1960.[109]

But on the left there was a deep-rooted and ideological antipathy to all forms of advertising, however well regulated, which held that the more effective it was, the more it corrupted. Writing in 1960 in the *New Left Review* (edited by Stuart Hall, whose views on the affluent society will be quoted later, and who was, as has been noted, to become a close colleague of Richard Hoggart at Birmingham University), the influential thinker Raymond Williams argued that advertising 'constituted an important medium for the reproduction and *imaginary* (my italics) resolution of profound social tensions'.[110]

> If we look at the petrol with the huge clenched fist, the cigarette against loneliness in the deserted street, the puppet facing death with a life-insurance policy, we are looking at attempts to express and resolve real human tensions which may be crude, but which also involve deep feelings of a personal and social kind.[111]

Only in a world without any advertising at all, or with advertising strictly controlled, it seems to have been believed, could these tensions be relieved *properly.*

Meanwhile, a *New Statesman* leader in February 1959 had claimed, in characteristic language, that the critics of advertising had revealed the 'absurd and disquieting...extent to which the intentions of parliament have been disregarded ... with the connivance of the Authority ... every day, the captive audience – roped in by the contractors – is sold off at fancy prices to the hucksters' by giving that audience what it wanted.

> The contractors have regularly played down to the lowest common denominator of public taste, and the BBC have followed ... From violence, crime, and the public's obsession with get-rich-quick shows, they have dredged up fabulous profits. [Labour's] main task is to ensure that the deplorable experiment of the Second Channel is not repeated when the Third is created.

Whether people might like to watch the Second Channel, or not. But, the leader-writer felt forced to admit, 'commercial television, like prostitution, [may be] here to stay.' [112]

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[109] Sendall, *ITV in Britain*, vol. 2, p. 106. We may recall that these timings did not allow for 'admags', which were transmitted at the rate of several a week, in peak, or just off-peak, time.
[110] quoted in Michael Kenny, *The First New Left* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995), p.105.
[111] Raymond Williams, 'The Magic System', *New Left Review* 4, 1960, pp.6-15, quoted in Kenny, 1995, p.105.
[112] *The New Statesman,* February 28, 1959.

In March, Chapman raised the question of 'natural breaks' in the House of Commons. He had a question for Ernest Marples about an occasion when an advertising break was inserted before the end of a popular song. Chapman had the precise date and time when it had happened. But Marples' staff had seen the question coming. Exactly the same fade-out, he said, was used as a technique on the original recording of the song by the same singer. He had the record downstairs in his room, with a gramophone. Would Mr. Chapman or any other member care to join him to listen to it? [113] The blithe insouciance of this reply can be contrasted with the much more restrictive attitudes of Marples' successor, Reginald Bevins, after Pilkington published its views on 'natural breaks'.[114]

Lawrence Black has recently unearthed examples of left-wing distaste for television in journals ranging from the Trotskyist *Revolt* - where a contributor described acquaintances of his turning into 'morose recluses' as a result of watching television - to the Gaitskellite *Socialist Commentary* which described viewers in the Rhondda as two-legged sheep.[115] The *New Statesman* leader above, with its open and arrogant scorn for the preferences of the majority, was not untypical. Television, in particular, was viewed on the left with 'thinly-disguised contempt'; it was 'a drug' that 'half-hypnotises' its audience 'nightly', and makes its audience at best 'totally passive', and at worst 'mercenary' and 'greedy'.

In all Black's quotes can be heard the bitter disappointment of Socialists with the British working-class. Not only had they rejected revolution, but also they had recently equally, and repeatedly, rejected the revisionist social democrats they had elected in 1945. Now, they were choosing to watch bad television. As Black says, leftist attitudes sounded very like those of the diehard TV-less, Gorer's abstainers. But Gorer's abstainers, it will be recalled, were mostly from 'the prosperous classes', who had once provided television with the bulk of its audience, and who had become a minority. Television as a whole, both BBC and ITV, had come to be something derided by members of a social class, some of them calling themselves Socialists, which had lost ownership of it.

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[113] *House of Commons Official Report*, Vol. 601, March 11, 1959, col. 1232.
[114] Cmnd. 1753, paras. 230 & 273, and p.180 below.
[115] Quoted in Lawrence Black, *'Sheep may Safely Gaze'* in Black and others, *Consensus or Coercion*, p.37.

Their authentic voice was to be found in the then liberal political and literary journal, *The Spectator*. Peter Forster, its television critic, entertained his readers weekly with searing accounts of the awfulness (mostly) of television, as in October 1959:

> Television at present is a parade of mediocrity, punctuated by moments of quality ... The low quality on screen is due partly, of course, to the low quality of many working within TV ... I wonder how many really first-class minds leaving the universities today join the BBC or ITV. [116]

Whether a journal aimed at educated sections of the middle-class was politically right or left-wing made little difference. The Assistant Editor of *The New Statesman*, John Freeman, was a much-praised television interviewer on the programme *Face to Face*. But the article he wrote for the paper in May 1960 was typical of many such. He insists that he did not, of course, ordinarily watch television. He made programmes, instead. But he'd been in hospital for a month, so he *had* been watching.

> I cannot help feeling depressed and alarmed by the utter triviality of nine-tenths of the flood of pictures which are so earnestly and expensively hurled at us...What I fear we are getting ... is the gentle, ceaseless, scarcely perceptible erosion of the angularities of free will and personal responsibility.

Most entertainment programmes were, quite simply, 'bad'.

> What talent there is must be more and more diluted in a polluted sea of comedy shows, crude westerns, quiz games, and teenage vocalists.

That teenage 'vocalists' might appeal to teenage viewers was not a consideration. Drama? 'The stilted clichés of the third-rate movie'. Documentaries? Too often 'an excuse to be boring'. *Panorama, Monitor,* and *Tonight*? 'Of variable quality'. And there was 'nothing comparable', even of 'variable quality', on ITV.[117]

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[116] Peter Forster, *The Spectator,* October 16, 1959. It may be noted that that a programme Forster singled out for excoriation in the same year was, 32 years later, the subject of extensive academic analysis and praise. The programme was a pioneering pop music show called *Oh Boy!* Forster called it 'a meeting place for morons ... obstreperously faithful to much that is most loathsomely contemporary ... no artistry, no musicianship, nothing but the reflection of the mindless nihilism of the dead-end kid.' (*The Spectator,* May 22, 1959). In 1991, Professor John Hill, showing no knowledge of Forster's criticism of it, described it as 'a striking and visually accomplished achievement ... a carefully choreographed and arresting use of cutting, light, and composition in depth'. (John Hill, 'Television and pop: the case of the 1950s' in *Popular Television in Britain*, ed. John Corner, p. 98.

[117] *The New Statesman,* May 28, 1960. Freeman adds that his enforced viewing included a repeat of one of his own programmes. It was 'obviously second-rate, and unsatisfactory'. He couldn't watch it all the way through, and switched off. Just over a decade later, in 1971, he was to become Chairman and Chief Executive of London Weekend Television. Despite the best efforts of Brian Young's ITA, the only LWT programmes shown in peak-time on a random weekend towards the end of that year, were three long-forgotten situation comedies (one on Friday, one on Saturday, and one on Sunday). Outside peak-time, there was *Wrestling from Watford*, one religious programme, one programme, on Sunday morning, on

Stuart Hall's contribution to *Out of Apathy*, a collection of radical essays, mostly, from the 'New Left' published in 1960, included the following account of the corruption of contemporary society by advertisers, particularly on television:

> The figures of sexual sensation take their place in the general montage of 'success', seducing our consciousness, undermining and corrupting moral standards, encouraging a weak, flaccid, self-indulgence at odds with the adult critical standards demanded by life. Sex has become the universal salesman of prosperity, on the hoarding, the television screen. Sexual adventure, the advertisers insinuate, is the reward of industry ... Capitalism, which emerged with the Methodist Sunday School and the Gospel of Work, now offers a week in Monte Carlo and the gospel of promiscuity.[118]

Television, the Pilkington Report was to say in a passage already quoted, and discussed in Chapter 5 below, 'must be in a constant and sensitive relationship with the moral condition of society'. In 1960, there were many in influential positions, in opposition and in government, on the left and on the right, who thought that the relationship was being handled in a far from sensitive manner; who believed that the moral condition of television, particularly commercial television, was poorly; who believed that 'the moral condition of society' itself was under threat; who saw, in the opportunity to re-regulate television that was now being offered a chance to make some necessary corrections. Any government would have been tempted to appease them, and to seek support openly from responsible Malvolios rather than, covertly, from hedonistic Toby Belches. Any Committee it might appoint would be more likely to consist of the former than the latter.

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collecting antiques, and, late on Sunday night, '*The Robert Kee Interview*'. Other network companies provided, mostly, old films for the LWT audience (*TV Times*, November 23, 1971). Perhaps the Kee interview (subjects were not listed in the *TV Times*) dealt with the 'angularities of free will and personal responsibility'.

[118] Stuart Hall, 'The Supply of Demand' in *Out of Apathy*, ed. by E.P. Thompson (London: Stevens, 1960), p. 82.

(viii): **Enter Sir Harry, eventually.**

Still without a policy on the future of broadcasting, after the 1959 election Macmillan replaced Ernest Marples as Postmaster General with Reginald Bevins, whom he knew well as his former Parliamentary Private Secretary at the Ministry of Housing in the early 1950s.[119] In his autobiography, Bevins wrote that Macmillan hadn't even mentioned television when he offered him the job at the Post Office. Bevins, who had been hoping for the Ministry of Health, believed that Macmillan had forgotten that there would have to be a new Television Bill, and that, after 'a gruelling time' back at the Ministry of Housing in the last government, 'the Post Office would be a nice political convalescence' for him.[120]

Bevins was an unusual Conservative politician. His background was lower middle-class Liverpool Irish. 'I still have a Liverpool accent', he wrote in his autobiography 'which used to make some of them laugh in the House of Commons'.[121] After initially working for Labour, he joined the Conservative Party in 1938; in Liverpool, there was still a long tradition of lower-class Toryism. Wartime service was followed by five years on Liverpool City Council, and, in 1950, he won the newly created parliamentary seat of Toxteth. Unlike Marples, he had never been a businessman, and he was not rich.[122]

In his first months in the office, he took up Marples' repeated proposal for a Committee on the future of broadcasting. A paper from the Post Office, which appears not to have survived, led Macmillan's Private Secretary to send the following note to Norman Brook. It was headed 'Public Fuz-Buz'.

> I have just been reading the PMG's paper to the Home Affairs Committee on Broadcasting. It has occurred to me that whatever may be decided on this particular paper, there will soon have to be some sort of inquiry into broadcasting, television, the New Channel, and all that, all of which will

[119] Marples was also at the Ministry of Housing at this time. Bevins was to return there, in the junior minister's job previously held by Marples, in 1957.
[120] Reginald Bevins, *The Greasy Pole*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), pp. 69 & 85.
[121] Ibid, pp. 14/15. His father had been a commercial traveller who later kept a newsagent's shop.
[122] Later Bevins was to describe a Sunday he 'did not enjoy' at Chequers during the arguments over the 1963 Act, when, he said, he discovered from 'random conversation on the lawns... that only Marples and I were without landed estates, Ernest because he had no use for one and I because it was beyond me'. Ibid, p.102.

attract much public comment, and cause a lot of excitement, and which is potential material for creating or discerning rifts within the Conservative Party. [123]

Perhaps one can hear the authentic voice of the civil servant, impatient with the politicians' acceptance of their subjection to public opinion, and their propensity to put off making decisions. But if the Cabinet were now to decide its own broadcasting policy, that would be even more likely to create rifts within the Conservative Party. On December 4, the Cabinet's Home Affairs Committee decided to go ahead with the inquiry, starting in 1960. Still, it seems, stalling was the prepared option.

The lack of urgency is again indicated by the fact that it was the beginning of March before Bevins circulated another paper on the proposed Committee of Inquiry.

This paper made the sensible suggestion that the BBC's Charter could be extended to 1964, to coincide with the expiry of the 1954 Act, so that the BBC and ITV could be considered together. The Post Office's technical Television Advisory Committee was due to report in April on recommended changes to transmission systems which would affect the number of frequencies available, and 'in view of the many highly controversial problems to be examined', the conflicting interests involved, and the expectation from 'responsible opinion' of a comprehensive review, the case for an independent Committee was 'overwhelming'.

The paper identified the problems on which the Committee would 'advise' as the following:

1. The future functioning of the BBC and ITA, including associated financial problems, i.e. the continued financing of the BBC by licence revenue and the amount of advertising, advertising practices, and the ITA's relation with its programme contractors, which have all been under attack, as well as the profits being made in Independent Television.
2. Additional television programmes. There were applications from the BBC and ITA for additional programmes for Wales and Scotland, and for subscription television. The Board of Trade have urged that the Committee should be called upon to pronounce, in advance of their final report, on the possibility of an early subscription television experiment
3. Whether television viewing hours should continue to be controlled.
4. The BBC sound monopoly. There is renewed pressure for the introduction of commercial sound radio.
5. Development of television for public showing.
6. Wired services. The relay industry is always pressing to be allowed to originate programmes for dissemination over its networks, e.g. subscription television.

The terms of reference suggested were as follows:

[123] TNA: PREM 11/3669, note from T.J. Bligh to Sir Norman Brook, December 2, 1959. The note ends with the suggestion that 'this is perhaps another argument for not having a Royal Commission on the Universities'.

> to review broadcasting in the United Kingdom and the dissemination by wire of broadcasting and other programmes, and television for public showing; to advise, as regards future services in the U.K,. on those to be provided by the BBC and ITA, and on any other services, and on the financial and other conditions under which the services should be conducted, and to make recommendations.

These were based on proposals Marples had originally made, but had been amended, after suggestions from the Cabinet Home Affairs Committee, to make it clear that, although the BBC and ITA would continue in existence after 1964, the Inquiry might consider 'an additional broadcasting organization or organizations'.

As to membership, Bevins suggested that the Committee should comprise, as well as the Chairman, one Conservative M.P. and one Labour M.P., and seven or eight others

> balanced to take account of experience in the field of education; trade unionism; commerce and industry; entertainment; and broadcasting; and to have regard to the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish interests. I think it important that there should be at least one member with considerable technical knowledge to keep the Committee on the rails.

The proposed timetable called for it to sit from Spring 1960 to the end of 1961, so that, after considering its report, the government could introduce legislation in November 1962, although this was 'a bit tight'. It was important to settle who was to be Chairman as soon as possible, especially as he would have to be acceptable to the Chairmen of the BBC and the ITA. Bevins put forward three names. In order of desirability, they were Lord Radcliffe, a senior Judge since 1949, who had just completed chairing an inquiry into the monetary system, Sir Harry Pilkington, and Sir Eric Ashby, a scientist and Master of Clare College, Cambridge.

An undated pencilled note says 'the Prime Minister has already seen and approved this'. On March 11, Macmillan wrote back to Bevins to say that 'as regards the choice of Chairman, this will be an enquiry of first class importance for the future both of sound broadcasting and of television'.[124]. Macmillan's minute added that he would be happy 'if you could secure Lord Radcliffe'. But Radcliffe might not be available, or he might decline; in that case 'I should be grateful if you would be good enough to consult me again before you proceed to your second choice'.[125]

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[124] Much later, towards the end of 1961, the Committee was to be told by its Secretary, presumably to boost members' morale, that he had personally heard Macmillan declare that this was 'the most important Committee that this Government [would] set up' (TNA: HO244/256, note from Lawrence, November 2, 1961).

[125] TNA: CAB 21/4725, letter from PM to PMG, March 11, 1960.

In other words, despite the increasing urgency, Macmillan was not yet prepared to approve Sir Harry as Chairman.

Norman Brook added another pencilled note on March 14. 'The revised terms of reference are very ham-handed. Can we not put them into English?'[126] The following week, he minuted the Prime Minister to stress the need to meet Bevins' timetable, so as to keep any legislation clear of the next General Election, and to give the BBC and the ITA 'plenty of notice of what their future functions will be after the middle of 1964'. And to suggest amended terms of reference as follows:

> To consider the future of the broadcasting services in the UK, including the dissemination by wire of broadcasting and other programmes, and the possibility of television for public showing; and to recommend what broadcasting services should in future be provided in the UK by the BBC, the ITA, or any other organisation, and what financial and other conditions should apply to the conduct of those services.

The point, he stressed, apart from improving the English, was that 'the continued existence of the BBC and the ITA should not be put in question, but it should be open to the committee to recommend the establishment of a third broadcasting organisation'. As to the Chairman, Radcliffe might be suitable, and might accept, but 'in any event, though other Ministers may express views, I suggest that you should reserve to yourself the final decision'.[127]

How best to word the terms of reference to assure the continued existence of the BBC and ITA was still in contention in Downing St. when Macmillan wrote to Butler on April 4. He had, he says, been talking to Bevins about the Committee's composition, and they had agreed a new shortlist for its Chairman. They were 'in order of preference, 1. Sir Oliver Franks (Chairman of Lloyds' Bank, a former Professor of Philosophy, and ex-ambassador to Washington), 2. Lord Radcliffe, and 3. Sir Edward Milner Holland (a lawyer and former Chairman of the Bar Council.). It seems that Macmillan had persuaded Bevins to drop Sir Harry from the list altogether. For one thing, it is clear that he lacked the intellectual clout of the three men named. Macmillan, though not wishing to involve himself further, still, it seems, did not altogether trust Bevins. He told Butler that he'd asked Bevins to consult him, Butler, about the membership of the committee. 'I

[126] TNA: CAB 21/4725, note from Sir Norman Brook, March 14, 1960.
[127] TNA: CAB 21/4725, note from Sir Norman Brook to PM, March 21, 1960.

should be very grateful if you could find the time to go into this with him, and let me know your conclusions', wrote Macmillan to Butler.[128]

There was yet more discussion of the terms of reference. Minutes flew backwards and forwards around Downing St., and to and from Post Office Headquarters. On April 22, Brook settled it; the final clause, after the words 'public showing', should read:

> to advise on the services which should in future be provided in the United Kingdom by the BBC and the ITA; to recommend whether additional services should be provided by any other organization; and to propose what financial and other conditions should apply to the conduct of all these services.[129]

That was the form of words that Bevins was to use in July. But, despite the 'tight' schedule, no announcement of the Inquiry was possible; there was still no Chairman. There is only one more relevant paper in the file. On June 30, Macmillan minuted Bevins: 'How are you getting on with the Chairmanship?' No answer is in the archive, nor any account of whether, and how often, the job was offered and declined.

In fact, Sir Harry's diary records that it was on June 29 that he saw Bevins to be offered the Chairmanship. The entry is characteristically brief: 'Flew to London, PMG., to be offered big new job'.[130] It was three and a half months since Bevins had named him as the second choice. Two weeks later, on July 13, Bevins announced the appointment in the House of Commons. A tight schedule was now even tighter.

A Cabinet meeting in March had allowed some Ministers to express doubts about whether 'it might be preferable for the Government to keep the formulation of policy in their own hands' as so many of the issues were 'political'. These doubts had been leaked to the *Daily Telegraph,* which declared on the day following the announcement that 'it was just, but only just, arguable that the future of broadcasting and television needed examination by an independent committee'. At the weekend the *Economist* solemnly voiced its disapproval. The Government should have made clear its views first, then a debate in Parliament should have followed, and only then should

[128] TNA: CAB 21/4725, note from Macmillan to Butler, April 4, 1960.
[129] TNA: CAB 21/4725, note from Sir Norman Brook, April 22, 1960.
[130] Personal collection, Sir Harry Pilkington Diaries, entry for June 29, 1960.

a Committee have been appointed to make recommendations about 'the best technical ways of putting Parliament's views into effect'. [131] It was, of course, by then, much too late.

(ix): **The Most Remarkable Pilkington.**

The historian of Pilkington Glass, Theo Barker, has called Harry Pilkington, who was company Chairman from 1949 to 1973, 'the most remarkable of all the remarkable members of the family', which had run the company since the 1820s.[132] It was probably, says Barker, the largest private company in Britain. Profiting from the post-war boom, by 1960 it had more than 40 subsidiaries and associated companies in 16 different countries.[133] That year was one in which it stood a chance of becoming even bigger. Encouraged by Sir Harry, it had invested heavily in a new process for producing float glass, in which it was eventually to establish a lucrative monopoly. Production began in 1957, but in the summer of 1960 it had only just gone on sale; for Pilkington Glass, and for Sir Harry in particular, 1960 was a tense and difficult year.[134]

At 55, he was a keen tennis player and cyclist, using his bicycle to travel around London. He had become President of the Federation of British Industry in 1953 (thus earning his knighthood), and had been a Director of the Bank of England since 1955. In February 1960, he had finished a three-year stint as Chairman of an inquiry into doctors' and dentists' pay. He travelled incessantly on Pilkington Glass business, at home and abroad.

On July 1, only three days after the job was offered, he notes that he was still 'undecided about broadcasting'. On July 4 he says that he was 'presented ... with very troublesome memorandum about my future' from a fellow board member who seems to have been protesting that the broadcasting job would take up too much of his time.[135] On July 5, Sir Harry flew to Brussels and back from Manchester. That evening, he returned to London by train. 'Tired, angry ... and

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[131] TNA: CAB128/34, Cabinet minutes, March 22, 1960; *The Daily Telegraph* , July 14, 1960; *The Economist*, July 16, 1960; all quoted in Briggs, *History*, vol. 5, pp. 260/261.
[132] T.C. Barker, *The Glassmakers, Pilkington: The Rise of an International Company, 1826-1976* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1977), p.423.
[133] Ibid, p. 408.
[134] Ibid, 1977, pp. 418- 423. The actual inventor was Alastair Pilkington, an employee who was unrelated to the Pilkingtons who owned the company. He was to become Chairman, as Sir Alastair, in 1973. Only in 1963/4 did the process become 'uninterruptedly profitable'.
[135] The fellow board member was Arthur Pilkington, a cousin. 9Personal interview with David Pilkington, September 17, 2001).

worried, so slept badly in midnight [train] from Warrington'. The following day he flew home by air-taxi 'to find garden ruined by heavy rain and gale. Unhappy arguments ... about my future. Know now that I will have to decline job'. But on July 12 he writes: 'Agreed to do Broadcasting Committee, feeling very doubtful. Board helpful though not unanimous'. The following day he was in London for the announcement of his appointment (as well as for a meeting of the F.B.I. Council). He records no reasons for the change of mind, but it is clear that he very much wanted the job, despite his doubts, and despite the concerns of his colleagues.[136]

In St. Helens, Sir Harry is remembered as an 'old-fashioned' and paternalistic employer. Joyce Wailing, who retired as a secretary in 1995, has said that the company looked after people: 'if you were a good worker, your children were guaranteed a job'.[137] Pensioners could expect a Pilkington rose on their birthdays. No-one was sure about Sir Harry's politics. One ex-employee recalled that other Pilkingtons were involved with the Conservative party, but she thought that Sir Harry might have been a Liberal.[138] As did his daughter, Mrs. Jennifer Jones; she even thought that her father might have voted Labour.[139] In fact, his diary shows that he voted Conservative in 1945 and in every election in the 1950s, though sometimes 'with hesitation' or 'with anxiety'. In 1959 there was no hesitation, and he wrote that he was 'pleased' by Macmillan's new government. In 1964, however, he recorded that he voted Conservative 'reluctantly', and he welcomed the Conservative defeat.[140]

In the 1950s, he would have known and worked closely with the Conservative leadership, especially perhaps Butler as Chancellor from 1951 to 1955. He was a frequent guest at diplomatic dinners at Downing St., and knew Butler well enough to invite him, on at least one occasion in 1960, to stay at the family home in St. Helens.[141]

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[136] Private collection, Pilkington Diary, July 1-14, 1960. For more on Sir Harry, see Chapter 3 below.
[137] Her father and grandfather worked for Pilkington's. So did her mother, and *her* father and grandfather, and her husband, his father and grandfather, and his mother's father .Personal interview with Mrs. Joyce Wailing, September 10, 2001.
[138] Personal interview with Miss Sylvia Partington, September 10, 2001.
[139] Personal interview with Mrs. Jennifer Jones, September 24, 2001.
[140] Private collection, Pilkington Diary, entries for: July 26, 1945; February 23, 1950; October 24, 1951; October 25, 1955, October 8, 13, 19, 1959; October 15, 1964.
[141] Butler declined. He had already arranged to stay with Lord Derby. Butler papers, E12/2 84/85, letters dated February 1, 1960, and February 2, 1960. During a visit by Macmillan to the North-West in March 1962, when he stayed with the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth, Sir Harry recorded in his diary, at a time when he was still working on the Broadcasting Committee Report: 'Busy day ... Prime Minister lunch in Liverpool'. In fact, Sir Harry was then one of 'more than 700 leaders of Merseyside's industry, commerce and culture' at a luncheon organized by the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce. Pilkington Diary, March 16, 1962: *Liverpool Daily Post*, March 17, 1962.

Why, as it now seems, were Butler and Macmillan so reluctant to accept Sir Harry's appointment? Did they think that he was simply not up to the job, and would be too ready to submit to civil service influence through the Committee Secretariat? Could it be that they sensed that he was, to use a phrase associated with a later Conservative politician, not quite 'one of us'? But Sir Oliver Franks, at one point their first choice, was a known Liberal, and on ennoblement in 1976, was to take the Liberal whip in the House of Lords.[142] Could it be that they were aware of Sir Harry's tendency towards monopoly, and, therefore perhaps, possessing a favourable attitude to monopoly in general? In 1968 the Monopolies Commission was to investigate Pilkington Glass, and then it was to find, after Sir Harry had led the company's defence, that it was innocent of the charge of misusing its monopoly of the float glass process. We are satisfied, its Report said, that:

> Pilkington [the company] is conscious of its responsibility, as a monopolist, to the public interest. This sense of responsibility may be associated to some extent with the long-established dominance of the Pilkington family within the business.[143]

The government was running seriously behind schedule. The summer was upon it. It had found itself, by accident or design, a Chairman for the Committee on Broadcasting who was a successful industrialist, but also an instinctive monopolist, a moralist, by all accounts a paternalist, and certainly not the kind of buccaneering businessman who might have seen nothing wrong in the size of ITV profits, and would have resisted the clamour for something to be done about them.[144]

That was just one of the contentious issues on which the Government had managed not to commit itself.

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[142] *The Times*, Obituary for Lord Franks, October 17, 1992.

[143] Monopolies Commission, *Report on the Supply of Float Glass* (London: HMSO, 1968), para. 304, quoted in Barker, *The Glassmakers*, p. 411.

[144] Were Butler and Macmillan anti-monopolists? Nigel Harris, in his 1972 book on the relationship between post-war British conservatism and industry, argues that Macmillan, at least, was not. In the late 1950s the Conservative Party under his leadership was swinging back to some of his ideas from the 1930s. Harris quotes Macmillan's Chancellor, Derick Heathcoat Amory, saying in the House of Commons in 1959 that 'our view is not necessarily that monopoly is a bad thing, but it is a bad thing if it abuses its power as a monopoly'. Few conservatives, says Harris, saw monopoly as intrinsically bad. They were generally prepared to trust large firms. *House of Commons Debates*, November 3, 1959, vol.612, col. 891, quoted in Nigel Harris, *Competition and the Corporate Society: British Conservatives, the State and Industry 1945-1964* (London: Methuen, 1972), pp. 58 & 221.

Chapter Three: **The Committee at Work: Cultivating Wholesomeness**

(i): **Introduction**

As the Pilkington Committee neared the end of its twenty-one months' work, Dr. Elwyn Davies, one of its members, wrote to Sir Harry. He wanted to propose a new version of the Report's final chapter. It should, he thought, provide a sketch of the television services of the future, in which the structure for ITV that they were recommending would ensure:

> programme companies competing to provide programmes of real merit and of regional and national relevance, and not of high TAM rating. The passing of mediocrity and triviality, the relief from violence and crime, more freedom of expression in religion and politics, the reasonable protection of the young and family, the cultivation of wholesomeness, while still having lots of fun and relaxation.[1]

Dr. Davies' proposed paragraph was not, in the end, included. Nonetheless, the Report was pervaded by a passionately-felt crusading desire to cultivate 'wholesomeness', to ensure 'real' merit, and to put an end to 'mediocrity' and 'triviality'. Not only television would be improved as a result of their work, but the whole of society would be changed for the better. The evils which had caused the moral panic would threaten no more. The Committee, as we have seen in the previous chapter, primarily came into being because the government wanted to postpone making a decision on the third channel, and, secondly, because of the concern about commercial television profits. It can be safely assumed that it was not part of the plan for the Committee to recommend the destruction of the country's favourite television channel, at least the one that most people watched most of the time. But, as this chapter will show, following the decisions made on the Committee's membership, and the appointment of its Secretary, the evidence it accumulated and the logic it adopted ineluctably led it to make that recommendation. Certainly, what to do with ITV became the most pressing and urgent question for the Committee and its members. Who were they? How did they reach their conclusions? How legitimate was their survey of the field? Can they escape the charge of being undemocratic, not to say arrogant?

[1] TNA: HO244/293, letter dated May 20, 1962.

(ii): **'Sir Harry's XI'**

Cabinet Office files include a document prepared in the Post Office in March 1960 on the suggested membership of the Committee. Lord Radcliffe was still then being proposed as Chairman; other members were each to represent entertainment, the trade unions, technical expertise and education, with two to represent business and two 'general'. The Post Office thought there should be two M.P.s, one Conservative and one Labour. In the event, however, there were no politicians on the Committee; the nomination of any Conservative would have meant the kind of political choice the government was, as we have seen, determined not yet to make.

Of the first names listed, only two were actually to join the Committee, Dr. Reginald Smith-Rose, an electrical engineer in the Department of Scientific Research as the technical expert, and Dr. Davies, who was then Secretary to the Council of the University of Wales, representing education and Wales.[2]

By the summer, Dennis Lawrence, who was to become the Committee's Secretary, had prepared a draft of a letter to be sent by Bevins to Butler which referred to there now being 'twelve members in place of the sixteen we originally wanted...with vacancies, as originally envisaged, for one trade unionist, one person from the cultural world, and an English farmer'. For now, he wrote, the Post Office was still waiting to hear from a distinguished industrialist, Sir Jock Campbell. But, if Campbell accepted, they had, claimed Lawrence on Bevins' behalf, 'a well-balanced committee ... if some people might think the trade union element a bit light, others would feel, I am sure, that two trade unionists, plus the three educationalists, would look too "pro-BBC", especially...as we would have one businessman less than we reckoned on at the outset'. A businessman called Ewart had 'declined' [3], and his place had been taken by John Megaw, a Northern Irish Q.C. Among those who had already accepted was the one trade unionist to join, Harold Collison, General Secretary of the Agricultural Workers' Union, and so, said the letter, 'there might be no

[2] TNA: CAB 21/4725. Somewhat oddly, as well as being the first choice, Davies was also listed as the third reserve for 'education', with two other Welshmen as first and second reserves, as was signified by a handwritten 'W' against their names. Reginald Brownell, a retired Permanent Secretary to the Education Ministry of Northern Ireland, was a first choice for one of the 'general' members, and also first and third reserve, without eventually being chosen

[3] 'Who's Who' for 1960 fails to offer any clue as to the identity of 'Ewart'.

need for an English farmer. 'I know', added Lawrence, 'that Sir Harry thought that sixteen was too many, and would be happier with less'.[4]

In the confidential note which J.D. Camacho, the BBC Political Editor, sent Hugh Greene from the Conservative Conference that October, which has already been cited, he reported on a conversation he had had with Bevins.

> I met, and over several hours, chatted with Bevins in the train on my way north. He was easier to talk to than I had been led to believe. He spoke in pleasant terms of his contacts with the BBC. He mentioned Sir Arthur fforde's surprisingly tentative manner which contrasted oddly with the rude toughness of big business and industrialists; he is unhappy about the power of big business. He spoke of the difficulties of appointing the Pilkington Committee - '95% of any group that would normally be chosen would have been pro-BBC - and wasn't very satisfied with the trade union representative - 'but none of the able men had been willing to serve' [5]

Bevins was later to claim that he appointed a 'politically broadly-based committee, some of whom quickly fell out'. [6] When the Committee's membership was announced, on September 8, 1960, there were thirteen men and women on the list, including the Chairman, and, apart from Sir Harry, two businessmen, including Sir Jock Campbell, who had accepted. One eye-catching name - from the cultural world - who quickly fell out was Peter Hall, the 29-year-old Director of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. He was to attend a total of three meetings out of fourteen held before he resigned because of 'pressure of work'. Campbell was to attend no meetings at all, because, in his case, of ill-health. The first to resign was actually John Megaw, early in January, after his appointment as a High Court Judge the previous November.

At its fourteenth meeting on January 27, 1961, the Committee accepted all three resignations but decided to replace neither Hall nor Campbell, as, it claimed, 'it would be difficult for new Members to make good the six (sic) months' intensive study present members had put in'. But they were now down to only ten members, including Sir Harry himself, and decided, despite the above, that 'there would be advantage in having Megaw replaced by another lawyer'.[7] That replacement was to be Francis Newark, another distinguished Northern Irish lawyer, and currently Professor of Jurisprudence at Queen's University, Belfast, and Secretary to the

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[4] TNA: HO 244/165, undated draft
[5] BBC WAC: R4/46/1, note from J.D. Camacho to Director-General, October 17, 1960. It is worth pointing out that Committee members received only expenses, and many trade union executives would have been reluctant to allow their leaders to spend time on an exercise, sponsored by a Conservative government, of little direct benefit to them.
[6] Bevins, *The Greasy Pole*, p.85.
[7] TNA: HO 244/2, minutes meeting, January 27, 1961.

University Council. But if first Bevins and then Butler, at Lawrence's prompting, had agreed that the Committee could include one businessman fewer than they had previously thought desirable, now the Committee, perhaps crucially, was two businessmen down, and, without 'the English farmer', arguably three. And, as will be shown below, Newark, the replacement for a replacement for a businessman, was to be closely associated with the proposals for ITV, the most controversially anti-business the Committee was to make.

In the end, the ten members, in addition to the Chairman, who were to sign the report were, in alphabetical order, Harold Collison; Dr. Elwyn Davies, an academic and university administrator; the entertainer Joyce Grenfell; Hoggart; Edmund Hudson, a Scottish industrialist; Newark; John Shields, the headmaster of a Winchester Grammar School; Smith-Rose; Elizabeth Whitley, a Scottish social worker and occasional journalist; and Billy Wright, the footballer. Despite the Post Office's earlier recommendation, there were no politicians.

The most prominent 'educationalist' on the Committee was Richard Hoggart, the second youngest member at 41. He was to write later that he believed that his nomination had come from civil servants in the Ministry of Education who had read *The Uses of Literacy,* which had sold widely on its publication in paperback in 1958 [8]

Many writers, as we have seen, have assumed that Hoggart played a dominant role on the Committee. But, as the following chapter will show, the accounts he has given of the Committee, on which later writers may have based that judgement, are sometimes contradicted by the available evidence. How important was he, and how much was the Report shaped by his personal views? A story he published in 1992 concerned the discussions in Cabinet after the Report was published. 'Who', Macmillan is reported to have asked, in what, says Hoggart, he imagines was 'an unengaged drawl', 'is responsible for this?' The Prime Minister is said to have been told 'some lecturer in a provincial university'. No source is given, but this scene is to be 'treasured', says Hoggart, 'because it conjures up the assumptions of the then ruling class'. [9] When he repeated this story in a volume published in 2000, in this version Macmillan is said to have asked 'who had *written* [the Report] (my italics)'. 'He was told, wrongly', according to this later version, that it

[8] Richard Hoggart, *An Imagined Life* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1992), p.60. Recently, he has said that he thought that many civil servants of the time were 'sympathetic to his views', and 'committed to democratic principles'. Personal interview, May 15, 2001. See also *The Uses of Literacy* (Harmondsworth: Pelican edition, 1958).
[9] Ibid, p.60.

had been written 'by a provincial university lecturer'.[10] The word 'wrongly' is not in the earlier account. Then, it is true, Hoggart was writing about who was responsible for the Report, not who had actually written it. As will be shown, the author of much of the Report was Dennis Lawrence. The author of its most controversial recommendation was Francis Newark. *Responsibility* for it was widely shared.

Hoggart certainly 'talked the most' of all the Committee's members, according to Elizabeth Whitley.[11] Andrew Crisell writes that Hoggart seems to have been the dominant member of the Committee, picking up a description of him as 'a celebrated historian of popular culture' [12] from an earlier writer, Peter Black, who had written that 'the public ascribed the dominant voice to ... Hoggart'. [13] Briggs, writing in 1995, called him 'the most articulate member of the Committee ... and the most controversial'.[14] In fact, on the Report's publication, most newspaper articles focused on Sir Harry, ascribing responsibility for the Report to him as Committee Chairman. Only the *Express*, which was anti-ITV, and welcomed the Report, picked out Hoggart for special mention, describing him as a 'left-wing university don'; the *Mirror* and *Telegraph*, for example, were content to name him as the Professor of English at Birmingham University, without giving him any special attention.[15]The *Sunday Times* and the *Observer*, as Briggs points out, did both publish articles at the weekend under the headline 'Going the whole Hoggart'. Clearly neither paper's sub-editors had been unable to resist the opportunity for a pun.[16]

Hoggart had in fact won some tabloid newspaper notoriety in 1960 when he had given evidence for the defence in the *Lady Chatterley* trial. His belief that the novel's sexual passages were 'tender and sometimes comical rather than objectionable - as compared with ... the violent sex to be found in many paperbacks freely available' [17] led him to declare, to widespread astonishment, that the book was 'highly virtuous, if not puritanical'. Whether Lawrence was puritanical or not, Hoggart's objections to allegedly pornographic paperbacks made it clear that he was, indeed, heir to the non-conformist Puritan tradition (the same northern English non-conformist tradition to which Sir Harry Pilkington also belonged). He reminds us, in his

[10] Richard Hoggart, *Between Two Worlds*, (London: Aurum, 2000), p.44.
[11] Personal interview, April 5, 2002.
[12] Crisell, *An Introductory History*, p.109.
[13] Black, *The Mirror in the Corner* , p.154. Hoggart was, of course, a lecturer, and later a Professor, in English Literature, with no particular claim to being a historian.
[14] Briggs, *History, vol. 5*, p.271
[15] The *Daily Express, Daily Telegraph, Daily Mirror*, June 28, 1962.
[16] Briggs, *History*, vol. 5, p. 273.
[17] Hoggart, *An Imagined Life*, p.53.

autobiography, that he had welcomed being called a puritan by some reviewers when *The Uses of Literacy* was published in 1956. He took it to mean, he wrote, that he had, correctly, passed judgements on mass entertainments as 'full of a corrupt brightness, of improper appeals, and moral evasions'. Referring to 'mass entertainments' generally (television is not mentioned in the book), the passage continues:

> They tend towards a view of the world in which progress is conceived as a seeking of material possessions, equality as a moral levelling, and freedom as the ground for endless irresponsible pleasure. These productions belong to a vicarious, spectators' world; they offer nothing which can really grip the brain or heart ... A handful of such productions reaches daily the great majority of the population: their effect is both widespread and uniform.[18]

That these words should have been written by a self-styled Socialist and 'working-class beneficiary of higher education' [19] may have misled contemporaries, and some later writers, into failing to see how similar they were to the dominant middle-class attitudes to popular culture reflected in the moral panic described in the previous chapter.

A different emphasis was discernible in a talk Hoggart gave in 1959 on 'The Uses of Television' to students in Birmingham, which was republished in January 1960 in 'a substantially revised form' in the monthly magazine *Encounter,* which the civil servants proposing members for the Committee may also have read, and then once again, in 1970, in a collection of essays.[20]

Reading the 1970 version now, it seems an unexpectedly positive piece. Gone is the talk from 1956 of corruption, impropriety and moral evasion. 'Television can stimulate', Hoggart writes; it offers 'windows on the world', and may 'widen our outlook'.[21] 'It can, instantaneously and sharply, offer huge numbers of people a sense of the excitement and variety, and possibly, the depths of knowledge'.[22] 'Few have thought much about its imaginative possibilities'.[23] 'It can be an important primary educator. In a wider sense it will be an important general educator'.[24] There were kind words, even, for the advertisements. Commercials are 'impure art'. But they may be art, all the same. 'Small material snobberies apart, [the majority of us] have often sought to buy

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[18] Hoggart, *An Imagined Life*, p.7; *The Uses of Literacy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), pp. 282/283.
[19] Crisell, *An Introductory History*, p.109.
[20] Hoggart, 'The uses of television' , *Encounter*, Vol. XIV–1, January 1960, republished in Hoggart, *Speaking to Each Other*, Vol 1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp.150/160.
[21] Ibid, p. 150.
[22] Ibid, p. 151.
[23] Ibid, p. 152.
[24] Ibid, p. 154.

with quite ordinary consumer goods gaiety and colour'.[25] Notable is an absence of the condemnation of the search for material possessions. But, he added, 'we have only to watch the programmes on ITV for a few evenings to appreciate which way such a channel inherently wants to push'. In the version in *Encounter* Hoggart continued:

> They want to push it towards a generalised form of life which looks much like the life we have known and for the rest looks nicely acceptable - but whose texture is as little like that of a good life as processed bread is like home-baked bread.

In the final version that sentence is omitted, and readers left to work out for themselves what that direction was.[26] Perhaps Hoggart had by then realised that readers would have been as unclear as to what 'the good life' meant, as they were, for the most part, unfamiliar with the texture of home-baked bread.

One other excision in Hoggart's published works should perhaps be noted here. An article called 'The difficulties of democratic debate', on the reception of the Report, was based on a lecture at Columbia University in New York. In the version originally published in the United States, Hoggart wrote: 'Ours was certainly a soberly written report. *Our secretary, who wrote it, had a clear and strong mind and a sobriety of style to match* (my italics). Some...remarked how unusual it was to see a case well and firmly argued without a gimmick in its 300 pages'. In the version reprinted, and more widely circulated, in *Speaking to Each Other*, the sentence in italics, with its praise for Lawrence, is not included.[27] But, as will be seen, Hoggart elsewhere has been generous in the credit he gives Lawrence.

He certainly shared the distaste for television game shows and quiz programmes common to patricians and left-wing intellectuals, as is evident in a question he put to Sidney Bernstein of Granada Television in the course of their oral evidence.

> We don't like the quiz shows, they're ... pandering to the need for quick money, having people up to produce the astounding fact that Cleopatra's Needle is on the Embankment and being told they're terribly clever, and here's a refrigerator.[28]

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[25] Ibid, p. 156.
[26] Ibid, p. 159.
[27] *Teachers' College Record* (New York: Columbia University). Vol. 64 no. 8, May 1963, p. 658; Hoggart, 'The uses of television', p.195. It is of course possible that Hoggart, for a domestic audience, was obeying the convention that a civil servant should not be publicly identified as the author of an official publication.
[28] TNA: HO244/40, transcript of Granada Television oral evidence, pp.3/4

Working-class people, it seems to have been thought, needed to work *hard* to acquire refrigerators.

The exchange between the 'socialist' academic - Hoggart - and the 'socialist' entrepreneur of popular entertainment - Bernstein - is notable for the former's failure to disturb the latter's equanimity, and for the latter's ability to confuse the former by defending only those quiz games his company actually produced. These, like *Criss Cross Quiz,* were not the ones to which Hoggart and others objected. Granada was of course happy, to transmit from the network others, including quiz shows like *Take Your Pick,* which Bernstein agreed appealed to 'the lowest common denominator'. Hoggart, notably, and the others, allowed him to escape unscathed. Given an opportunity to engage in meaningful debate with an opponent who shared some similar attitudes, Hoggart failed to take it. Further extracts from this exchange are given in Appendix A.

Elwyn Davies, with whom we began the chapter, was a former Manchester University lecturer in geography, then Secretary to the Council of the University of Wales. His acceptability to the Civil Service was later confirmed when, in 1963, he became the Permanent Secretary to the Welsh Department of the Ministry of Education. Initially, he had been unsure whether he might accept membership of the Committee; as he wrote to Bevins, he was Secretary of another Committee appointed by his university to make the case for a Welsh television service, and his brother was the BBC's Head of Programmes (Wales) in Cardiff. Bevins' office replied that he probably should resign from the secretaryship, but that his brother's position was not a problem. His university's Pro-Chancellor, Lord Morris of Borth-y-Gest, whom he had consulted before accepting, advised that Davies' 'predisposition in favour of Wales' would be known, but 'it will also be known that you will approach all problems in a judicial spirit...in a reasonable way'. Morris felt it appropriate to add that he had recently made a speech in the presence of Sir Arthur fforde, the BBC Chairman, in which he'd spoken of education as 'that process which begins by learning one's ABC and which is continued by appreciating the BBC'.[29] His assumption that Davies was similarly 'pro-BBC' was probably shared by the civil servants who nominated him.

The other educationalist, also with family connections to the BBC, was John Shields, Headmaster of Peter Symonds' Grammar School in Winchester, both of whose sisters, he wrote to Bevins, had been employed by the BBC, one as secretary to Reith himself. Shields' papers retain

[29] National Library of Wales: Elwyn and Margaret Davies papers, D5/1.

Lawrence's letter in which all appointees were advised of the kind of questions that would be put to them at a press conference.

> The general line will, of course, be to avoid admitting any preference for the BBC or the ITA; to avoid appearing to have pre-judged any of the particular issues which will be put to the Committee, and to avoid suggesting that you haven't time for, or don't care for, television.

In the current climate, few Headmasters might have been expected to express a preference for the ITA of the time. Answers were suggested to the questions that could be expected:

> Q. Have you a television set?
> A. If you can volunteer that you have had a set for some time, so much the better.
> Q. Do you watch television regularly?
> A. The suggestion to avoid here is that you watch so infrequently as to imply you have no real interest in television; or even that you think 'there's too much of it'.

Shields' replied that 'you will be glad to know that I possess and use a television set'.[30] Lawrence has said that Shields was recommended by the Department of Education on the grounds that he was a grammar school headmaster who happened, unusually, to be a member of the (normally exclusive to Public Schools) Headmasters' Conference.[31] He was 'not a leader', said Elizabeth Whitley, one of the Scottish representatives on the Committee, 'he just said whatever Joyce Grenfell said', being, she added, particularly star-struck by the famous actress and comedienne.[32]

Grenfell was clearly one of the most talkative and influential figures on the committee. According to her biographer, she was at about this time 'one of the best paid performers in television' and she, alone, lost income through her unpaid membership of the Committee, as it meant she regularly had to turn down offers of well-paid work, particularly abroad. She was 'very surprised', it seems, to have been invited.

> But she had been a regular listener for over thirty years and a broadcaster for over twenty. She was also a passionate believer in radio and television as a power for good.[33]

And she was a former radio critic for *The Observer*.[34] But, as her biographer has also pointed out, she had herself not owned a television set until after some successful BBC appearances in the mid 1950s, and she had been 'very resistant' to commercial television, not 'deigning' to appear on it

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[30] University of Southampton, Shields papers: MS78/A1/1/1.
[31] Personal Interview, March 20, 2002.
[32] Personal interview, April 5, 2002.
[33] Janie Hampton, *Joyce Grenfell* (London: John Murray, 2002), p.269.
[34] Aged 26, having published three poems in Punch, Grenfell had sat next to J.L.Garvin, Editor of the *Observer* at a lunch party given by her aunt Nancy Astor at Cliveden. Hampton, *Joyce Grenfell*, pp.67/68.

until 1957.[35] She and Hoggart became 'great' friends and, with their spouses, continued to see each other regularly until her death in 1979. He wrote that she was 'not an intellectual, but she had uncommon intelligence...her pertinacity and honesty led her to become the litmus paper of the committee's own sense and honesty' .[36] It would have been a brave man, or woman, who dared to disagree with her in committee. She was a former debutante, with aristocratic family connections in both Britain and America, and Dennis Lawrence, who says he proposed her nomination, has described her as 'a terrific snob'.[37] (Hoggart, by contrast, wrote that she was fiercely against 'the snobberies of many of her class' but certain that [he] 'made too much of class divisions'.[38]) Her letters give some idea of her various attitudes. On popular television programmes, she writes after making an appearance on the Ed Sullivan show in New York in 1958: 'Quite fun. Went well. Awful programme tho' - tumblers, skiffle, Japanese 'Fiesta' and a "Glee Club", too'.[39] On social issues, she writes the following on 'class', after watching a (BBC) television programme about 'a young Oxford scholar' (unnamed, but clearly the successful writer-to-be, Denis Potter):

> Fascinating subject, and for once some truth is being forced out. The interesting thing is that the top and bottom get on very well and easily. It's the middle and lower that don't jell, but grate.. The middle - the lower-middle - are my unfavourite group...the telly crowd, suspicious, narrow.[40]

And, as a devout Christian Scientist,[41] she comments (unrealistically, it may be thought) on an outspoken editorial in one of her Church's newspapers:

> All about sex and homosexuals, dirty books, plays, etc. Rather good it was, saying we had to face up to the human fact that such things were rotting morals, and that the young accepted it as normal. But young Christian Scientists could take a lead among their contemporaries in resisting all this.[42]

When, in March 1961, Sir Arthur fforde came to give the BBC's oral evidence to the Committee, he confessed himself unable to define exactly what it was the BBC stood for, but, he said:

> I think of what Sir Ian Jacob said to me ... He said "Look here, you've got to get it into your head that the BBC is a jolly fine show - and when you do get involved in it you realise that it is, and that it would take a very long time and a fairly strong man to wreck it.

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[35] Personal communication from Janie Hampton.
[36] Hoggart, *An Imagined Life*, 1992, p.64 and p.292.
[37] Personal interview, March 20, 2002.
[38] Hoggart, *An Imagined Life*, p.65.
[39] Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge, Grenfell papers: LP9/1, letter dated January 27, 1958.
[40] Grenfell papers: LP9/1, letter dated August 26, 1958.
[41] Influenced by Nancy Astor, her father had converted the family to Christian Science when Joyce was thirteen. Hampton, *Joyce Grenfell*, p.25.
[42] Grenfell papers: LP9/1, letter dated February 18, 1962.

Miss Joyce Grenfell: Hurrah. [43]

At no time do the files show that any attention was drawn to a possible conflict of interest on her part in that a considerable proportion of her income came from - and would very likely continue to come from - the BBC. After Peter Hall's resignation, she was the only member of the Committee to have any substantial experience of broadcasting, or of any other branch of the entertainment or media business. Clearly, she was not typical of workers in the industry, and could not and would not speak for them.

The other woman on the Committee, as already mentioned, was Elizabeth Whitley, who had experience in social work, and had written an occasional column for the *Scottish Daily Express.* More relevant, she thinks, was that she was (in the language of the day) a housewife and mother, with five children, and married to the Minister of St. Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh. Her membership allowed several different boxes to be ticked. According to Hoggart, she was 'very clever'.[44] Of, perhaps, unexpectedly radical bent (she was later to stand several times as an SNP candidate in parliamentary elections), her husband had been a notable campaigner for the poor in the Glasgow slums before moving to Edinburgh, and she was less ready than Grenfell, with whom she got on well, to cheer for the BBC. She was, for example, severely critical of what she saw as its failures in Scotland, and in education. More generally, she criticised the BBC for what she saw as its failure to provide 'effectual machinery for complaints from outside'.[45] But she was even more critical of STV's egregious failures, and in particular of its betrayal, as she saw it, of all things Scottish. She had met Roy Thomson, its founder, and believed that he was only concerned with two things, making money, and gaining a knighthood. But, she has said, referring to the Committee as a whole, 'we weren't anti-ITV, we were pro-decency'. Crucially, she said 'we all started with the fear that broadcasting in Britain would sink to the level of the United States...we felt we had to resist the American model'.[46]

She had little time for her fellow-Scot on the Committee, Edmund Hudson (later Sir Edmund), dismissing him as 'a creep'. Both Scots, according to Lawrence, had been nominated by the Scottish Office as 'upright members of the great and good' in Scotland'. Hudson was a businessman and Chairman of Scottish Agricultural Industries, and, as such, his appointment had been welcomed by Bevins. But Lawrence and Whitley concur that he made little impression. 'He

[43] TNA: HO244/37, transcript of BBC oral evidence, March 29, 1961.
[44] Personal interview, May 15, 2001.
[45] TNA: HO244/267, letter from Elizabeth Whitley, dated February 11, 1962.
[46] Personal interview, April 5, 2002.

didn't speak out for the ITV bosses', Whitley has said. 'If he did, it would always be mild'. Lawrence's memories agree. 'I'm left with no great impression', he has said. 'If he'd been opposed to something, it might have been significant - he could have carried dissent further'. [47]

There do, in fact, seem to have been some occasions on which Hudson dissented from the majority view - and one was in an anti-business direction, producing a rare case of documented disunity. When a draft of the chapter proposing the changes to ITV reached Hudson, he objected that it contained no recommendation that 'the revenue from a public concession raised for the purpose of sustaining a broadcasting service' should only be used for that purpose rather than for 'founding business empires in other walks of life'. [48] That was in April, 1962. But Hudson's suggested new paragraph didn't reach the Secretariat until several days after the deadline for proposed changes in May, by which time the full Committee had approved the original draft. Hudson demanded that his new paragraph should be added to the chapter as it stood.[49] That produced a flurry of concern from both Lawrence and Sir Harry, who wrote to Lawrence:

> We have got to be careful in the way we handle Hudson at this moment. He has done a tremendous amount of work throughout, and just lately, I believe, has been feeling that his points didn't get through in the way that those of Hoggart did ... I don't think that this is really so.[50]

Meanwhile, he wrote a placatory note to Hudson on the same date:

> I am not absolutely sure how much of [your new paragraph] is too late: the intention is that [the chapter] will go off to the Stationery Office this week, if at all possible ... I certainly hope that no-one is going to put in a personal addendum.[51]

A more urgently-phrased letter from Lawrence to Sir Harry was also written on that date:

> We are bound to stick to what has been agreed. There is no time to reconsider the chapter at the next meeting. It must go to the Stationery Office before then.

And it fell to Lawrence to defend the rights of private enterprise:

> I do not anyway see how one can dictate to a commercial company how it is to use its profits - this strikes at the whole idea of private enterprise. [Hudson's suggestion] would be seen to challenge the place of private enterprise in ITV. Our report would be damaged. It will be said that our

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[47] Personal interview, March 20, 2002. The BBC was being advised not to follow American leads as early as 1925. Its Head of Music, Percy Scholes, declared, after a visit to America, that competition among American radio stations 'was lowering programme standards'. Burton Paulu, *Television and Radio in the United Kingdom* (London: Macmillan 1981), p. 14.
[48] TNA: HO244/272, note from E.P. Hudson, dated April 9, 1962
[49] TNA: HO244/272, note from E.P. Hudson, dated May 12, 1962.
[50] TNA: HO244/272, note from Sir Harry Pilkington to Lawrence, May 14, 1962.
[51] TNA: HO244/272, letter from Sir H. to Hudson, May 14, 1962.

> essential concern was with the amount of the companies' profits rather than with the mis-application of the profit-incentive.[52]

Sir Harry replied that the idea behind Hudson's amendment was 'pretty dubious', and that he could be persuaded that 'it could do the report a lot of damage'. [53] Evidently, though there is no record of this, he was so persuaded; the chapter as published did not incorporate Hudson's new proposals.

Notably, however, according to Lawrence, there was around this time some sort of alliance between Sir Harry and Hudson, in which they were involved in a late 'half-hearted' attempt by Sir Harry to 'water down' the Committee's proposals for ITV. It was apparently drawn up in the course of one lunchtime meeting between the two businessmen. Lawrence has said that he was never told the substance of the proposed changes, but he claims to have understood, from Francis Newark who had been approached for his support, that they represented 'a major departure' from what had been agreed. Newark, Lawrence says, was 'pivotal', and his support for any proposal coming from Sir Harry and Hudson would have carried great weight. But, according to Lawrence, Newark turned them down. No written record exists of any of this, nor is there any specific mention of it in Sir Harry's diaries.[54] As we shall see, however, Sir Harry frequently expressed private dissatisfaction with Lawrence as the Report neared publication.

Professor Francis Newark, it may be recalled, was the Belfast-based lawyer who joined the Committee in March 1961 as a replacement for another lawyer appointed to the bench. Hugh Greene at the BBC asked his Controller in Belfast for any information he had on Newark, who had been born in the English midlands and practiced as a barrister in London before moving to

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[52] TNA: HO244/272, letter from Lawrence to Sir H., May 14, 1962.
[53] TNA: HO244/272, letter from Sir H. to L., May 15, 1962.
[54] Personal interviews, March 20, and April 5, 2002. Lawrence has provided another account of this incident. In a letter to me dated May 10, 2002, he wrote as follows:
'The matter of the watered-down version of the proposals for ITV: that I recall as something which Sir Harry had privily discussed with Hudson. I thought it was Sir Harry's idea. I felt pretty cross about it. To me it seemed as though he was trying to bounce an idea through the Committee at a very late stage and after all major matters had been decided. That's why there's nothing on the record. My problem was this: should I, and how could I, engage the other Committee members? I concluded that I owed them a duty to inform them. They were told by telephone. When eventually Sir Harry sounded them, they - not only Newark - rejected it.'
Disparities between the two versions of the story are explicable in terms of indistinct memories of an incident forty years ago, of which no written record exists. But it will be seen that in this version of the story, it is probable that Committee members *were* aware that Sir Harry had doubts about the proposals for ITV; according to the first version given to me verbally, it is still likely that Lawrence, who clearly felt strongly about it, would at least have informed Hoggart, with whom he had formed a close friendship. When asked about this affair, Elizabeth Whitley had no memory of it.

Belfast. The reply cannot have been very encouraging. Newark was a member of the Northern Ireland Advisory Board of the BBC, with an interest in sport, especially cricket.

> He looks and listens quite a lot, particularly to plays and outside broadcasts ... he has been critical of regional policy - worried about missing a better concert from London for the City of Belfast Orchestra ... I am not sure about his attitude to the BBC as a public service, but I have a suspicion that he believes in 'competition': that ITV has given the BBC a healthy jolt. Politically he is Conservative.[55]

Lawrence says that Newark was a man 'of quite considerable intellectual distinction', and, quickly became one of the leading members of the Committee, 'the one whose consent you had to have'. Although his instincts were deeply conservative , he seems to have been no puritan. [56] Lawrence quotes him as declaring 'I've reached an age [he was 54] when it's clear that everything that happens just makes things worse'. But he did share Lawrence's view that, in ITV, it was 'a structural nonsense' to have a body set up to be in charge (the ITA) when the real power was elsewhere (in the ITV companies).[57] As will be shown below, it was he who wrote the detailed proposal for the future of ITV that became the Report's most controversial recommendation. There is evidence, however, that on at least one occasion when Newark departed from the general view, he was unable to influence the final result to any significant degree. Objections had been raised to the popular programme *Candid Camera*, which had earned its producing company a rebuke from the ITA. As Lawrence's original draft of the Report put it:

> We share the Authority's concern about this programme. However good the producer's intentions, it must in a long series be hard to avoid relying for laughs on the public exposure of ordinary people's inabilities. This would be regrettable in itself and poor light entertainment. And it occupies valuable television time to the exclusion of good light entertainment. [58]

Newark objected. He enjoyed *Candid Camera*. He didn't think that it was at all true that its comic effects were obtained by exploiting ordinary peoples' 'disabilities' (sic).

> Most, but not all, of the programmes I have seen in this series were cleverly devised and well handled and certainly escape the charge of being 'poor light entertainment'. The net point is whether a humourous situation, otherwise worth showing, becomes objectionable because it

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[55] BBC WAC: R14/46/12 letter from Controller Northern Ireland to Director-General, March 20, 1961.
[56] In 1973, a collection of his legal writings, mostly on arcane aspects of Northern Irish law, was published to mark his retirement. It also included the text of a speech he had given to graduating students in 1956, in which he told them that he would not exhort them about their duties to others. 'There is', he said, 'a lot of sound sense in the story of the little girl in Sunday school who, on being told that she was here on earth to do good to others, asked what the others were here for'. F. H. Newark, 'Graduation speech, 1956' in F. J. McIvor, *Elegantia Juris: Selected Writings of F.H. Newark* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly, 1973), p.186.
[57] Personal interview with Lawrence, March 20, 2002.
[58] TNA: HO244/268, draft Chapter VII, para. 31.

> depends basically on a practical joke. I don't know whether the 'performers' get paid, but they certainly consent, and I cannot see in these circumstances what private right is infringed or what public decency is outraged. [59]

The passage quoted above from Lawrence's draft was, in the end, omitted. And there was no mention of *Candid Camera* in the published Report. But the tone of the final version is hardly different from the original. Retained is a condemnation of 'party game' inserts into variety programmes (the reference is to *Beat the Clock* in *Sunday Night at the London Palladium*). The criticism of such programmes, according to both versions, is justified. As published, it continues with the following passage:

> One may, of course, make a fool of oneself among relatives or friends because one is then participating in an intimate and lively human relationship: to do so for the amusement of others, who are both unseen and unknown, is to risk being merely a foolish spectacle. In the case of one series, which, though not a "party game", prompts the same issue of principle, the Authority expressed concern to the producing company, and the programme has since been improved. But some programmes are still objectionable, and the criticism of them valid.[60]

The reference to *Candid Camera* can hardly have been more transparent. What was surely intended as a riposte to Newark carries the unmistakeable tone of a seminar-room putdown (from Hoggart, it may be thought).[61] Newark must have decided to allow someone else to have the last word.

The other rank-and-file Committee members, Harold (later Lord) Collison, Reginald Smith-Rose, and Billy Wright, the professional footballer and former Captain of England, were no more likely to speak up for ITV than those discussed above. Though Lawrence has said that he was 'not wildly left-wing' [62], towards the end Collison did argue for an even more radical separation of programme-making from advertising than the Committee was to propose, and let slip that he was opposed to the whole principle of commercial television.[63] Eventually, though, he settled for the consensus view.

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[59] TNA: HO244/268, letter from F.H. Newark, February 26, 1962.
[60] Cmnd. 1753, para. 183, p.59.
[61] The present writer is compelled to add that, very early in his career, in 1966, he was employed on a series of 'Candid Camera' which was returning to British television after some years' absence, following the above criticism. The then producer told him that the catch-word to be used at all times on air was now 'Smile - you're on Candid Camera', and as many subjects as possible should be seen responding to it with the suggested smile, thus ensuring that they were seen as complicit in the joke. See also p. 211, below.
[62] Personal interview, March 20, 2002
[63] TNA: HO244/2, minutes meeting, December 6, 1961, p.8. Collison had proposed an Advertising Revenue Board, separate from the ITA, which would collect advertising revenue, and then pass it on to the ITA. The proposal was voted down unanimously at a meeting on November 24, 1961, in his absence. He withdrew it at the next meeting.

Wright's appointment attracted considerable press attention. His was the only name to be headlined by *The Times*, for example.[64] He was 36, still playing professional football, and it helped that he was married to a show-business celebrity, one of the popular singing Beverley Sisters. Hoggart has recalled that he was 'a bit out of his depth'. [65] According to Lawrence, he attended 'pretty regularly but spoke rarely' and he 'came down on the right side when matters were at issue'.[66] He was later to become Head of Sport at ATV. Smith-Rose rarely stepped outside his role as the technical expert.

As for the Chairman himself, we have seen that there was little reason to suggest that he was the kind of businessman who was a committed supporter of the free market. The Curran/Seaton/Freedman notion that he was greatly concerned with the absorption of the working-class into the middle-class bears little examination either.[67] Sir Harry was a rose-grower, a teetotaller, and a Deacon of the Congregationalist chapel near his home outside St. Helens in Lancashire, where, if he could, he worshipped twice every Sunday, often flying home from London or abroad to do so. As has already been pointed out, though a Lancastrian, and from a family that had been rich for many generations, he shared much of his background with the Yorkshireman Hoggart, in particular the traditions of doughty puritanism and non-conformism. He watched little television.[68] He enjoyed sport, classical music, opera, especially Gilbert and Sullivan, West End comedies, Scrabble, difficult crossword puzzles, and, in his fifties, playing tennis to win.[69] He seems to have read little. Hoggart called him 'a good example of the old-style quango chairman ... full of public spirit ... in many ways a conventional, intelligent but not intellectual, hereditary British businessman', with particular commitments to his Lancastrian roots, manifesting them in his devotion to St. Helens Rugby League and Lancashire cricket. 'Above all', he was:

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[64] *The Times,* September 8, 1960.
[65] Personal interview, May 15, 2001.
[66] Personal communication, August 12, 2001.
[67] See Chapter I, above.
[68] Pilkington diary. An entry for January 17, 1960, mentions that he watched television that evening, but he 'had a head cold and felt very low' On February 8, he records that he watched 'This is Your Life' (then produced by the BBC) but makes no comment. On March 6, 1960, in another rare mention, he writes that he watched the play 'Journey's End' but also refrains from comment. It was a Sunday; he notes that he'd completed the 'Ximenes' crossword and, as usual, attended both services at the Congregationalist Chapel.
[69] Ibid. Entries January 14, 1960, March 2, 1960, July 29, 1960, etc. He almost invariably recorded the scores, win or lose, of the games of tennis he played.

> fair-minded and brave, so that when our conclusions began to look radical and likely to be unacceptable to the government, he did not flinch - once he had been carefully convinced - from making the radical decision.[70]

Lawrence's evidence, and the Committee's files, as will be seen, suggest, on the contrary, that Sir Harry *did* 'flinch'. And to Joyce Grenfell's account of him in a letter to a friend as 'brilliant, kind, perceptive ... and sometimes insensitive too ... always four moves ahead of everyone else' [71] should perhaps be added Lawrence's recollection that he possessed 'a measure of personal vanity ... a certain amount of amour-propre'. But Lawrence has also said recently, despite the above, that he 'never had to persuade Sir Harry' to accept 'a moral concept'.[72]

At a preliminary Committee meeting on August 25, when there were eight members present (Hoggart, for example was absent), Sir Harry, doubtless recalling Selwyn Lloyd's Minority Report nine years earlier, declared his predilection for consensus, as well as a lack of respect for politicians.

> The Chairman emphasised the importance of approaching the issues in a judicial frame of mind, and of endeavouring to reach unanimity in order to avoid contentious matters being thrown back to parliament for unguided decision...after eighteen months (sic) of hard work it was quite certain that members of the Committee would know much more of the issues than the ordinary M.P., and it was the Committee's responsibility to give a firm lead to Parliament.[73]

We have already seen how keen he was to have the support of his Board when accepting the Chairmanship. His nephew David has said that, under his Chairmanship, the Pilkington Board decided everything by consensus, a vote never being called.[74] His aversion to discord, and his belief that agreement could be achieved where others might see only the potential for contention, marked his entire life, as industrialist, public figure and churchman.[75] It was an attitude, perhaps, characteristic of many of his class and generation. Jeffrey Richards has written of the two ideologies (or, perhaps better, myths) that dominated Britain from the nineteenth to the first half of the twentieth century: evangelical Protestantism with its 'intense seriousness of purpose... and enthusiastic missionary spirit', and 'chivalry', based on 'the virtues of the gentleman' and 'a sense

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[70] Hoggart, *An Imagined Life*, pp.62-64.
[71] Grenfell papers: LP/9/1/1, letter dated February 6, 1962.
[72] Personal interview, March 20, 2002.
[73] TNA: HO244/1, minutes of meeting August 25, 1960, p.1.
[74] Personal interview, September 17, 2001.
[75] It is noticeable, for example, that in the memorial edition of the company newsletter shortly after his death in 1983, among the tributes was one from his local Minister, declaring that when the Congregationalist Church merged with the Presbyterians to form the United Reformed Church, 'no-one worked harder than Sir Harry to ensure a united Church'. (The Revd. W. Wright in 'Pilkington News', January 1984).

of responsibility'.[76] Sir Harry aspired to embody both ideals; he may have recognised that they were also deeply embedded in Hugh Greene's BBC.

The Report's publication may be anticipated to note here that, for the *Daily Mirror*, it confirmed the fears it said it had had all along that the Committee as a whole was biased towards the BBC. An editorial - which admitted towards its end that the Mirror group 'had an interest' in ATV - savaged the proposals for ITV. 'Who are the eleven', it asked rhetorically, 'who hope (and what a forlorn hope) that any government will be mad enough to swallow Pilkington's Bitter Pill?'

> Sir Harry himself is a monopolist in a large slice of the glass industry - now striving to erect a glasshouse around ITV and to achieve a government monopoly in television. No wonder large stones are already being thrown.

It listed the members of the Committee by profession. And then it chucked some stones of its own designed to hurt.

> Are they the First Eleven? Or even the Second Eleven? Alas, no. Many were approached to sit with Sir Harry but few accepted: the bottom of the barrel had to be scraped. The Report comes from the Fifteenth, or Sixteenth or Seventeenth Eleven ... It is impossible, reading the Report, not to conclude that Sir Harry's Eleven were dead against the whole conception of independent television from the start. [77]

The accusation in general was, of course, correct. We know from Bevins' conversation with Camacho that he had difficulties in finding anyone who was not pro-BBC to appoint to the Committee. But it was only Collison with whom Bevins said he was unhappy. So had the government really scraped the bottom of the barrel? First, it is hard to see what source the *Mirror* could have had for its claim, though the confidence with which it was made suggests it believed that the source was reliable and authoritative. It may have been Bevins himself, or someone close to him, but in the light of his already-expressed opposition to the proposals for ITV (which gave him adequate reason to discredit the Committee) he could hardly be seen to be a disinterested witness. In any case, the timetable makes it unlikely. There was barely time for a First XI to be approached, for them to decline, and then for invitations to go to a Second XI, let alone a Sixteenth or Seventeenth.[78]

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[76] Jeffrey Richards, *Films and British National Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997) pp. 25/26.

[77] The *Daily Mirror*, June 28, 1962, p.2.

[78] Files in the National Archives contain none of the correspondence concerning the appointments, other than Lawrence's undated draft confirming that twelve members of the Committee had at that stage been appointed. But, as has been noted, Sir Harry accepted the Chairmanship on June 29, 1960, and the full list

Was it possible that a Second or Third Eleven was chosen deliberately, with a view to being able to rubbish any unacceptable recommendations? Lawrence has said that that was 'not the way that things happen'. When it came to choosing the Committee, government departments were circulated; civil servants in each department proposed the best candidates they knew for what was recognised as an important job; and choices were made on merit, with the intention of establishing a proper balance. And anyway men like Hoggart and Newark had substantial reputations; so did Sir Harry; and so did Sir Jock Campbell and Peter Hall.[79] Nonetheless, it is likely that the limited knowledge civil servants might then have possessed of the world outside Whitehall, especially of the media, did not make for genuinely imaginative appointments.

(iii): **The Secretary to the Committee**

It has already been made apparent that Dennis Lawrence was a highly influential figure, and, as will become clear, his was the dominant influence.

The same age as Hoggart, and, like him (and Bevins), a scholarship boy, he grew up in South London.[80] His father was 'moderately skilled working-class', and Lawrence remembers him being unemployed for long periods during the depression. In 1936, when he was sixteen and leaving

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of Committee members was announced to the Press on September 7 (and it will be recalled that there was a preliminary meeting on August 25). Even though the first lists of possible members had been drawn up in March naming, as we have seen, only two of those finally appointed, unless prospective members were approached before Sir Harry accepted, which is unlikely, that left only two summer holiday months for Sir Harry to be consulted, for the selected individuals to be contacted, and for them to consult colleagues, make their decisions, and reply. Shields' and Davies' letters inviting them onto the Committee both went out on July 20, and are the only ones we have; their replies are dated July 21 and July 25 respectively. Not everyone would have been as quick to respond. (Shields papers, MS78/A1/1/1; Davies papers, D5/1).

[79] Personal interview, March 20, 2002.

[80] Details of Lawrence's career come from personal interviews on July 7, 2001, and March 30, 2002.

grammar school, further full-time study was not considered, and Lawrence was thought lucky to get a clerical job in the City of London. It happened to be in the Post Office, which employed half a million people, and shared with the BBC (which it had regulated since the beginning of broadcasting) a commitment to the idea of a public service operated by a benign monopoly. He continued his education in LCC evening classes, and, in September 1939, was hoping to take up a place at London University. Instead, he went into the army, and like Hoggart served in North Africa, then spent much of the war as a prisoner. He rejoined the Post Office in 1945, and quickly climbed into the Administrative Class. Hoggart says that he was promoted very rapidly 'by ability, and by exceptional integrity even for a civil servant'.[81]

In 1960 Lawrence was an Assistant Secretary in the Radio Services Department of the Post Office. By his own account, he had given some thought to the way in which Independent Television was being organized, and the importance of getting the structure right. If you put everything to do with money in one place, he believed, and expected another separate body to regulate the way it was spent, it was asking the almost impossible. It wasn't that the ITA was supervising the companies badly; it was that the structure was misconceived. But equally important, as he thought about television's potential, was a strong personal commitment, rooted in his own experience, to public service, and to maximising opportunities through education.

At the Committee's first meeting, according to Lawrence (no mention is made of this in the minutes), the question of who was going to write the Report was raised. Shields suggested Hoggart, who declined on the grounds that his style was recognizable, and that the result would not be the Pilkington Report but the Hoggart Report. The job then, says Lawrence, automatically became his. He has written recently:

> As soon as I knew that I was to write it - as, I must say, I earnestly wanted to - I pulled together my ideas on its structure. Not that I came uninformed. As a civil servant in the Broadcasting Branch of the G.P.O., I'd been for two years engaged with the subject, drafting answers to parliamentary questions, writing replies for Ministers to send to correspondents, reading the professional journals and engaging with the BBC and ITA. So I'd come to know my subject, more than - Richard Hoggart excepted - members of the Committee could have been expected to.
>
> I supposed that:
>
> (1) There would need to be at the outset a pronouncement on the purposes broadcasting should serve. There would be a strategic need to get, if we could, a sufficient consensus on this from the broadcasters, so as to preclude a situation in which the Report's basic assumptions could be denied. Such a denial could have been used by any who wanted to invalidate its findings.

[81] Hoggart, *An Imagined Life* , p.65.

(2) The critique of the services provided by the broadcasters would be by reference to those assumptions. In the light of views put in testimony to the Committee, how did the broadcasters' performance measure up to the assumptions?
(3) If it did not, why not? Either the machinery or the people would be at fault. If the first, that would suggest a need for structural change. If the second, the need would be to read the Riot Act to the people answerable for the services. In the event, the Committee found that the machinery was at fault.[82]

This coincided with the opinion Lawrence had long held - and with Hoggart's. The two men, with much in common, quickly became, and remained, firm friends, forming a partnership which was the core of the Committee.

At its first full meeting, on September 20, Collison 'referred to the impact of broadcasting on society, and suggested as a question for consideration how far these services should seek to mould tastes and attitudes'. At the following meeting, on October 2, it was agreed that the Secretariat should prepare a paper on 'how far the broadcasting authorities should assume responsibility for the cultural standards of the community'. [83]

We can assume that Lawrence had manipulated the Committee to give him a chance to write the 'pronouncement' that he had thought necessary, and to set the tone for the entire operation. As can be seen, it laid down a framework for the Committee which practically ensured - especially in the light of its membership - that it would reach the conclusions it did. Overpage, we can briefly compare some extracts from it with statements from Chapter III of the Report as published, on *The Purposes of Broadcasting*, written some fifteen months later, after numerous Committee meetings and a huge weight of written and oral evidence. In the later document, it will be seen that it is not only cultural standards that are being considered but moral standards also. The arguments are expanded but they hardly change.

[82] Personal communication, dated August 12, 2001.
[83] TNA: HO244/1, minutes meetings September 20/21, and October 2, 1960.

Lawrence paper, 1960[84]	*Report, final version, 1962*[85]
'Broadcasting, and especially television - pervasive, capable of dramatic, vivid and reiterated presentation to people in their homes, transient and, therefore, hard to analyse and criticise - has a unique power to influence and persuade. Certainly many advertisers believe this. (para.4)	'The disquiet about television [in written and oral submissions to us] derived from the view that the power of the medium to influence and persuade is immense...many drew attention to the special characteristics of television: to its capacity for dramatic presentation...to the transience of its pictorial statements, and to the consequent difficulty of analysing and criticising them' (para. 41)
'We must reckon, therefore, with a probability so strong as to amount to a certainty that broadcasting will affect cultural standards; and that, if the medium is abused, there is a risk that the effect will be bad or even disastrous'. (para.4)	'The presumption must be that television is and will be a main factor in influencing the values and moral standards of our society' (para.42)
'Such slogans as "Broadcasting should give the public what it wants, and not what someone thinks is good for the public"... invite us to believe that the issue is democracy versus paternalism, or the free society freely choosing versus the directed society having what it is given...these are two extremes...it is possible to believe that the issue is not one of either-or principle, but one of degree.' (para.6)	'The antithesis: "broadcasting should give the public what it wants and not what someone thinks is good for the public" is a gross over-simplification of a complex and continuing problem; a statement which presents unreal extremes of view as though they were the only choice...they should be recognised for what they are: slogans which are largely deceptive'. (para.50)
'How are the broadcasting authorities to know who are the public, and what it wants?...the majority is not the public...the mass audience is not the public'. (para.9)	'The public is not an amorphous, uniform mass...it is composed of individual people; and "what the public wants" is what individual people want. They share some of their wants and interests with all or most of their fellows; and it is necessary that a service of broadcasting should cater for these wants and interests'. (para.44)
'If the idea of choice is to have real meaning, the range of choice must be exhaustive. But the public can hardly know what the range is. It must be for the broadcasting authorities to know it, and to present it'. (para. 9)	'A choice is only free if the field of choice is not unnecessarily restricted. The subject matter of television is to be [should be] found in the whole scope and variety of human awareness and experience.' (para. 47)

[84] TNA: HO244/4 (BC/Sec/32). This paper is reproduced in full as Appendix B.
[85] Cmnd. 1753, pp. 12/20.

Hoggart has called the chapter on *The purposes of broadcasting:*

> the finest statement in English of those issues. It was generally attributed to me. Dennis Lawrence and I discussed the issues, both during debates in the committee and together outside. But the written chapter was his, subject only to review by a drafting sub-committee chaired by Sir Harry. It left the draft virtually unchanged, as a true expression of the committee's corporate opinion.[86]

And, as can now be clearly seen, that corporate opinion matched very closely the views that Lawrence had presented to the Committee before it had started work.[87]

(iv): **The weight of evidence**

Lawrence has recently insisted that:

> the Committee's findings on the performance of the BBC and independent television were an objective reflection of the opinions offered in evidence by those speaking for, or as, viewers and listeners.[88]

An immense amount of written and oral evidence was submitted to the Committee. Altogether, the Report announced, a public appeal produced a total of 636 memoranda 'from organizations and individuals'. Additionally, there were 'a large number of letters' from 'members of the general public'. In addition, organizations representing 'as wide a variety of viewpoints as possible' were invited to give oral evidence, and the Committee spent a total of 39 days taking it. 'This has greatly helped us', said the Report, 'as has the diversity of the sources of the submissions'. [89]

The BBC's evidence, along with that of its various advisory bodies, amounted to 319 pages of the published volume of memoranda, and their oral evidence was spread over a total of eight days (some shared with others). The ITA's totals were, respectively, 198 and nine days (the extra time spent with the ITA being required by the contentiousness of their evidence, as the Committee saw it).[90] Additionally, of course, there were both written and oral submissions from the thirteen ITV programme companies, from professional bodies involved with broadcasting, from the advertising industry, and from other special interest groups more or less peripherally connected. Associated Rediffusion's written submission includes statements typical of those made by the ITV companies:

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[86] TNA: HO244/4 (BC/Sec/32); Cmnd.1753, pp 12/20; Hoggart, *An Imagined Life*, p.65.
[87] For more on *The Purposes of Broadcasting*, see Chapter Six below.
[88] Personal communication, August 12, 2001.
[89] Cmnd. 1753, pp 2/3.
[90] Cmnd. 1819, index, pp. iii/iv.

> Associated Rediffusion has always regarded itself as a responsible broadcaster, it has co-operated willingly with the ITA in trying to produce properly balanced programmes. It has produced and shown a large proportion of programmes with a minority as well as those with a majority appeal.[91]

Dr. Eric Fletcher, the Deputy Chairman of ABC Television, and a Labour M.P., assured the Committee in his oral evidence that:

> Personally, I am very conscious of the criticisms one hears from time to time about the quality of all television, BBC as well as ITV. I have always been most anxious that we should make the maximum contribution to improving the quality of all television ... my own philosophy is that we have to balance the necessity of getting an audience, and at the same time of educating the audience to look at programmes of the best possible quality.[92]

That such evidence was treated, properly, with some scepticism is evident in the following exchange with Lord Reith, who had declared in his oral evidence a month before Fletcher's that the BBC and ITV are bound to be different, because the main aim of the BBC is 'public service', and the aim of ITV is to 'to make money'.

> *Chairman:* You will not be surprised to know that what the programme companies have declared is that their main purpose in life is to put out the maximum proportion of serious programmes.
> *Lord Reith:* Is that hypocrisy or merely humbug?
> *Miss Grenfell:* Wishful thinking, I think.
> *Chairman:* I think it is humbug more than hypocrisy.[93]

Perhaps that was meant charitably.

A similar degree of scepticism was not applied - but a greater degree of charity - to those who were claiming to give evidence on behalf of viewers and listeners.

A list made at the time by the Secretariat of the individuals and voluntary bodies wholly unconnected with the industry, who submitted their written views on 'programme content or similar', enables a judgement to be made as to how representative these were.[94]

Altogether there was, perhaps surprisingly, a total of only 52 groups.[95] Three were from individuals.[96] Of the remaining, several were from hobbyists of various kinds. The Royal Society

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[91] Cmnd. 1819, p.630.
[92] TNA: HO244/36 transcript of oral evidence, ABC Television, May 17, 1961.
[93] TNA: HO244/47 transcript of oral evidence, Lord Reith, April 7, 1961.
[94] TNA: HO244/9, index.
[95] I have excluded from this total special-interest groups like the Federation of British Industry, and the Association of British Chambers of Commerce.

of St. George[97] and the Scottish Ornithological Society[98] may have spoken for relatively large numbers. It is unlikely that that was true of the British Federation of Banjoists, Mandolinists and Guitarists, Southern Section, who wanted regular transmissions of 'fretted instrument music', and demanded that such instruments should be named correctly, [99] or of the British Beer-mat Collectors Society, who complained that beer-mat collecting hardly featured on British television at all. [100]

A group making a claim to speak for very substantial numbers was the Association of Municipal Corporations, representing, it declared, the views of more than 27 million people, with whom it, and its local authority members, were, it said, 'in close touch'. Without offering any account of how it had collected those views, its evidence was that the Association shared:

> a common criticism made of some television programmes that they have been damaging in certain moral aspects, and that too many have featured sordid, unsavoury and violent themes. Wrong standards of behaviour and domestic life have been portrayed, such as regular and frequent drinking of alcoholic liquor and incessant smoking, to such an extent that a false picture is given of the normal way of life.[101]

An extract from this 'evidence' was the first to be quoted in the final Report.[102]

Nineteen submissions were from religious organizations, ranging from the Church of England Radio and Television Council [103] and the Catholic Body in England and Wales[104] to Biggleswade Trinity Methodist Church Wives' Club. (They said that they didn't know if there was any censorship of programmes, but, if there wasn't, there *should* be.)[105] There was evidence, too, from

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[96] They were E.P. Thompson, the New Left historian, Peter Forster, television critic of *The Spectator*, and Dame Francis Farrer, a former member of the ITA who had left after criticising ITA weakness. There were fifteen published 'memoranda' from individuals not on this list. They included four M.P.s, one member of the House of Lords, and other distinguished figures, such as Sir Ian Jacob and Sir Kenneth Clark, both, of course, retired from professional involvement with broadcasting. Altogether 54 individuals are recorded as having written to the Committee (Cmnd. 1753, Appendix B, pp.299/330). Most were not included in the published volume; some seem not to have been retained on file.

[97] TNA: HO244/14 (BC/180)

[98] TNA: HO244/15 (BC/298)

[99] TNA: HO244/13 (BC/120

[100] TNA: HO244/20 (BC/453)

[101] Cmnd. 1819, Vol. I, Memorandum from the Association of Municipal Corporations, pp.1157 & 1160. It will be shown in the next chapter that officials of the Association had been in contact with the BBC. See p.? below.

[102] Cmnd. 1753, Para. 81.

[103] TNA: HO244/14 (BC/154) For more on the Church of England, see below.

[104] TNA: HO244/16 (BC/318)

[105] TNA: HO244/20 (BC/489)

the Presbyterian Church of Wales, which was one of several concerned, among much else besides, about alcohol:

> The [regular] substitution of sherry or gin for the cup of tea as the 'ice-breaker' on social occasions...is a dangerous convention to place before the future womankind of the nation...at the same time, we are grateful for the measurable superiority of the BBC TV Service to the ITV Service in which we find little matter for praise or congratulation.[106]

Twelve of these submissions came from women's organizations, such as the Lancaster South Townswomen's' Guild, who typically didn't like 'the sexy mumbles, gyrations and suggestive swayings of so-called 'pop' singers' on either BBC or ITV.' [107] There were eleven submissions from teachers' groups, or other educational bodies, some as small as the Association of Staffs of Colleges and Departments of Education, Northern Ireland (110 members), which referred to television's role in 'the insidious spread of false values...too many appeals to easy indulgence, vanity and greed'.[108] The National Union of Teachers, with a million members, regretted that 'the majority of programmes that attract mass audiences are either trivial or superficial, or appeal unduly to aggressive or acquisitive instincts'. [109] They, at any rate, had recognized that there was a 'mass' audience for the kinds of programme which the writers of these submissions practically unanimously deplored. It was unclear, though, whether it was the programmes they wished to criticise most, or their audiences.

Looking at the list of the organizations who submitted their views, and reading through them, it is hard not to agree with the contemporary critics of the Report, such as the writers of a Hobart paper from the Institute of Economic Affairs (then an obscure body, only just becoming known for its free market ideology), which argued that the submissions 'were not representative of the people in general'.[110] To support its case, it quoted audience figures, and a survey conducted by the Sunday Times immediately after the publication of the Report. That had produced a figure of 60% for the proposition that the general standard of television programmes was 'satisfactory' or better. This, it argued, was high in view of peoples' natural tendency to complain, and with the audience having only two channels to choose from. Interestingly, the survey is said to have

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[106] TNA: HO244/14 (BC/189)
[107] TNA: HO244/21 (BC/516)
[108] TNA: HO244/13 (BC/125)
[109] TNA: HO244/13 (BC/109)
[110] David Sawers, 'The sky's the limit' in *TV: From Monopoly to Competition - and Back?* , ed. Wilfred Altman (London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 2nd. edn., 1962), pp. 71-119. In April 1962, at his request, the Secretariat sent Hoggart a copy of the first edition of this pamphlet. He sent it back, calling it 'a shabby piece of work' but adding that its pro-ITV stance 'might stiffen any sinews that needed stiffening', and actually increase anti-ITV feeling. (TNA: HO244/236, note dated April 21, 1962).

shown that 85% thought television had no effect on the morals of people 'like themselves', and 3% thought it had a good effect.

Apart from one submission from the National Broadcast Development Committee, which was a successor to the pressure group set up to campaign for commercial television in the first place[111], not one voluntary body presented any evidence in favour of the principle of competition in broadcasting. Unitarians, in a brave attempt to examine what was meant by a 'good' programme, did argue that a 'good' *Emergency Ward Ten* would be 'better' than a 'poor' *Panorama*, [112] and the Methodist Wives of Biggleswade (see above) did recognize that 'both BBC and ITV produce many enjoyable programmes'. Apart from those, there were practically no even moderately favourable mentions for ITV, or for any ITV programmes. Twelve of the thirteen submissions in this category which specifically called for a third channel - many thought there was too much television already - wanted it to go to the BBC or to an unspecified non-commercial operation.[113] This contrasted with the *Sunday Times* survey, as reported in the Hobart paper, which reported 62% of those questioned in favour of a commercial third channel, and only half as many a BBC third channel (with an increase in the licence fee.) [114]

The Viewers' and Listeners' Association, whose Chairman was the historian and former BBC Third Programme producer Peter Laslett, [115] wanted a second BBC channel on which U.S. imports would be banned, ITA services 'freed from commercial control', and sound broadcasting services 'given the money and support necessary ... to restore their world-wide reputation'.[116]

Part of the same organization was the Sound Broadcasting Society, formerly the Third Programme Defence Society. T.S. Eliot gave oral evidence on its behalf, alongside Laslett and the composer Michael Tippett. A question from Hoggart summarised their case for them:

> What you regret bitterly is that over the whole range of [BBC radio] programmes, entertainment, amusement, readings and so on, the reading that they make of the public - I'm not talking about

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[111] TNA: HO244/20 (BC/490) Even this organization, doubtless seeing the way the wind was blowing, argued the need for 'more emphasis' on 'the social political and religious impact' of television.
[112] TNA: HO244/18 (BC/394)
[113] The exception was the Church of England Radio and Television Council, which wanted the Third Channel shared between the BBC and the ITA. For more on this, see below.
[114] Sawers, 'The sky's the limit', p.80.
[115] Not to be confused with an organization of the same name run by Mrs. Mary Whitehouse, which was not formed until 1964.
[116] Cmnd. 1819, p. 1262.

> highbrows or middlebrows, I'm talking about culture now - is an unnecessarily low one. This was your case?

Eliot, in a rare intervention, gave the answer, which was, according to the official transcript:

> Yes, I should say, myself, that it is very dangerous to make it one's principal goal to give the public what it wants, because very often those who do that underestimate public taste at the beginning, and are very likely to end by debauching it.[117]

A version of this was quoted in the Report, where, its authorship unattributed, it was subtly, but significantly, different, the qualifications - 'very often' and 'very likely to' - omitted. It read:

> Those who say they give the public what it wants begin by underestimating public taste and end by debauching it.[118]

A third version is given in Hoggart's autobiography. It reads:

> Eliot paused ... and then produced in ... a sentence so finely phrased that you could easily identify the semi-colon before the final assertion: "Those who claim to give the public what the public want - *(pause)* - begin by underestimating public taste; they end by *debauching* it." '(italics in original).[119]

The shorthand-writer can, perhaps, be forgiven for not transcribing the semi-colon remembered by Hoggart many years later.

The Workers' Educational Association, as part of its attack on the 'deliberate triviality' of ITV quiz games in particular, chose to quote a powerful, and indeed poetic, passage from Hoggart's own *The Uses of Literacy.*

> We are in a pallid half-light, where nothing startles or shocks or sets on edge, and nothing challenges' or gives joy, or evokes sorrow; neither splendour nor misery; only the constant trickle of tinned milk-and-water which staves off the pangs of a positive hunger and denies the satisfaction of a solidly-filling meal.[120]

In fact, in the original this refers specifically to popular 1950s novels, and can scarcely have been intended to refer to television quiz shows, which are not mentioned in Hoggart's book. The WEA submission also included a quotation from the revered Christian Socialist historian, R.H. Tawney. He is said to have declared in an address that 'triviality is more dangerous to the soul than wickedness'.[121] No further reference is given to help understand what Tawney meant. It is

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[117] TNA: HO244/47, transcript of evidence of the Sound Broadcasting Society, August 29, 1961.
[118] Cmnd. 1753, p.17.
[119] Hoggart, *An Imagined Life*,, p.70.
[120] Cmnd. 1819, p.847, quoting Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, p.195.
[121] Cmnd.1819, p.847.

not, it might be thought, as a bald statement, an easy case to argue. The WEA submission chose, indeed, not to argue it, but just to state it.

Again without attribution, the phrase is quoted in the Report..

'Triviality', it says, is 'a natural vice of television ... where it prevails it operates to lower standards of enjoyment and understanding. It is, as we were reminded: "more dangerous to the soul than wickedness".' [122]

Most readers of the Report were to disagree.

The conclusion imposes itself, although Lawrence and others have been correct in insisting that the Committee's findings did indeed reflect the evidence they were offered, that evidence was skewed towards the views of an unrepresentative section of society. Those, almost certainly the majority, who were more or less content with the entertainment-driven programmes ITV was providing did not bother to write to the Committee.

An unexpected insight, however, came in oral evidence from one member of the Church of England Radio and Television Council. It had suggested in its written submission that the new channel should be shared equally between the BBC and ITV, and that its programmes 'should be designed to meet the needs and interests of minorities, and particularly of young people'.[123] A similar suggestion had come from groups in the industry, such as Associated Rediffusion. Others were highly sceptical .[124] Many church groups and teachers had expressed their concern about the effects of television on teenagers. But giving oral evidence on behalf of the Council in August 1961, Dr. Kathleen Bliss, an educationalist, reported that, through the Church's Board of Education, opinions about television had been canvassed from 'three-quarters of a million young people'. The research concluded that there was a very large number of young people who didn't watch television at all. A typical response was: "Mum and Dad watch it - we go out when the

[122] Cmnd. 1753, pp. 34/35. A note from Hoggart in TNA: HO244/265 indicates that the passage on triviality was 'plotted out' by Newark, and that he, Hoggart, 'altered some of the phrasing'. The quotation from Tawney, though, is in Lawrence's original draft.
[123] TNA: HO244/20, letter from the Revd. David Skinner..
[124] See Associated Rediffusion's written submission (Cmnd. 1819, pp. 634/635). The BBC was vehemently opposed. When asked about it during his oral evidence, Hugh Greene declared that it would be totally unworkable. He felt that 'the attraction for some of the people suggesting it would be that that channel would have very few viewers'. (TNA: HO244/37, BBC oral evidence, April 13, 1961, p. 37).

television's on - we prefer the street or the club or one another(sic)". Dr. Bliss had found, she said, that there was 'the utmost contempt for television' among adolescents.[125]

However, she was not asked by the Committee about a document which the Council had submitted some months earlier, which demonstrated that others in the Church had paid little attention to the research. It is worth quoting, as it illustrates the thinking that was common among many who gave evidence. However unworldly (and unlikely) it may also seem, it consisted of 'a specimen programme schedule for a full month', painstakingly drawn up in some detail by the Council's secretary, the Revd. David Skinner, specifically to attract young people and minorities, and, in the words of Bishop Cockin, the Council's Chairman, to 'restore the proper sense of indoctrination as an essential duty of the educator'.[126]

An average of one hour's religious programming - or at least of programmes featuring clerics - would be included in nightly transmissions running from 6pm till 10.15pm. Among other programmes, there would be a regular *Saturday Night Debut* in which Oliver Tidsley, 17, might one week 'sing to his own guitar', and, in another week, John Callahan, 19, might read 'one of his own short stories'. There'd be frequent discussion programmes on issues of the day, invariably including a churchman, and a weekly *Half-hour Hansard.* In *Make and Mend* 'William Weston, Carpenter' might show viewers 'how to build cold frames and deckchairs', and someone else would demonstrate 'a home-made washing-up machine'. There would be symphony concerts and opera, and, on Saturday night, in *Double Beat,* there might be 'the latest in the modern mood' with 'Wallie Coots and his Players'. And there would be serious programmes at peak times on subjects like geology, the common house-fly, and malnutrition in India.[127] In specifying what its creators thought suitable for television viewers of the 1960s, especially the young, this document surely offers a valuable insight into the thinking of an influential section of educated Britain (though, as we can now see, a section whose influence was in decline). However out of touch and out of sympathy with the tastes of the viewing public as evidenced in viewing figures, some church people were determined to use the opportunity offered by the Pilkington Committee to try to change the face of British television. It is remarkable that they still believed in the possibility of indoctrination.

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[125] TNA: HO 244/39, transcript of oral evidence, the Church of England Radio and Television Council, pp.18/19.
[126] Ibid, p.27.
[127] TNA: HO 244/20. 'Specimen Schedule', dated May 1961. It was not included in the printed volume of submissions. One week's schedule of programmes is attached as Appendix C.

(v): **The shadow of darkness: television as a moral agent**

Practically all the submissions to the Committee were unanimous in stressing broadcasting's 'unique power to influence and persuade', as Lawrence had put it. Even a comment from the Unitarians offering, as before, a rare note of dissent, in that they believed 'it *is* possible to exaggerate broadcasting's influence on the community', was speedily followed by a caveat that neither should its influence be underestimated.[128]

The Catholic Church's submission was typical. It referred to a papal encyclical issued in 1957, but it spoke for many. It is worth quoting at some length.

> The wonderful advances in technical knowledge that have been made in our day in the spheres of the cinema, sound broadcasting and television can be supremely beneficial and also very dangerous. And that for these reasons: these new possessions and appliances are within almost everyone's grasp, and they exert a most powerful influence on men's' minds. According as to whether the subjects presented to the senses are noble or degrading, so men's minds can be flooded with light or tainted with the shadow of darkness, exalted in nobility or degraded by corruption[129], adorned with beauty or left a prey to uncontrolled passions.

Television had the 'special power' of entering into the family circle, which made it particularly dangerous.

> It is wrong to endanger in any way the sanctity of the home, and the Church, as her right and duty commands, has always striven with all her power to prevent these sacred portals from being violated under any pretext by evil television shows.[130]

If proof was unavailable of the effects of television - 'so far, there is little conclusive evidence' admitted the Report - 'the strong tide of opinion, explicit or implicit, in the submissions to us leaves no doubt whatsoever' that, until and unless there was proof to the contrary, the presumption had to be that television had the power people said it had.[131] Why else, it was often asked, should advertisers spend such large sums? It was pointed out in the Report that a spokesman for the Proprietary Association of Great Britain (who were companies selling branded

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[128] TNA: HO 244/20 (BC/394)
[129] cf Hoggart, in *The Uses of Literacy,* p. 195 (see note 121 above)
[130] *Miranda Porsus*, English translation, sections 104, 109/111, quoted in TNA: HO 244/16 (BC/318).
[131] Cmnd. 1753, para. 42, p.15.

medicines) had told the Committee: 'the best way to sell the goods is to put a man in the home. The nearest you can get to that is television'.[132]

Educational bodies joined with religious groups in expressing their particular concern over the effects of advertising. As a market began to develop among the working-class in the 1950s for seductive products like washing-machines, cars, and, as we have seen, television sets, what Lawrence Black has called J.B. Priestley's 'derisive' concept of 'Admass' [133] began to take hold among many on the left. Advertising stood out as emblematic of the enemy, offering a distinctly different view of the good life from the traditional ideals of socialism. Richard Hoggart was certainly among the cultural critics on the so-called New Left, like his friend Raymond Williams (who has already been quoted), who were associated with this view. But it was also widespread among cultural conservatives, who deplored what they saw as advertising's ability to make people more covetous and acquisitive.[134]

When representatives of the ITA came, in August 1961, to give oral evidence to the Committee on advertising-related matters, the transcript shows both sides' total lack of comprehension of the other's point of view. No Committee members appeared to dissent from the insistent belief shared by the Catholic Church and the British New Left - and many others - that television was tainted with the shadow of darkness in the way in which it manipulated the minds and the emotions of the unwary and the unsophisticated. Hoggart asked whether advertisers on television should be allowed to meddle with feelings in the way Williams had described, especially on a medium regulated by a public body - the only one of its kind. He pointed out that many of the representations they had received were about the attitudes implied in the commercials, and, he said, their use of 'irrational emotional appeals'. And there was the special nature of television to contend with.

> Television has a much sharper impact [than the press or hoardings], not just that it makes that floor look twice as shiny as it is, but that it makes that child look much more winning than it is when it's selling soap powder ... these are questions which are not asked by eggheads or the lunatic fringe, these are questions which concern a whole lot of parents, women's organizations and so on.[135]

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[132] Cmnd. 1753, para. 41, p.15. The statement was not questioned. It should, however, be pointed out that, if one manufacturer had 'a man in the home', so also did all of its competitors who advertised, thus cancelling out all advantage, unless one advertiser was considerabley more persuasive, or less irritating, than all the others.

[133] Black, 'Sheep may safely gaze', p. 31.

[134] See, for example, Lord Hailsham's antipathy to advertising on television, p. 33 above.

[135] TNA: HO244/41, extracts are taken from the transcript of evidence of ITA, August 15, 1961, pp. 26/30.

He could quote dozens of examples, he said, among them advertisements for Fairy Liquid, 'a beautifully dramatic little cameo', and the 'what is a mum' campaign for Persil, 'a dramatic presentation of the whole ethos of family life, obviously designed to appeal to people who are not very sophisticated'.

Sir John Carmichael, Deputy Chairman of the ITA, and for thirty years an official in the Sudan Civil Service, spoke up for the advertisers.

> These pretty pictures, are they really so harmful? What's the end result? What do they do? They may persuade somebody to buy that particular soap, but what's the harm in that? It doesn't mean they're buying twice the amount of soap. Presumably it means the exclusion of somebody else's soap.

Hoggart clearly expected his case to be better understood, without it having to be argued.

> You know, if you really seriously ask me that, you obviously haven't read the burden of the case. I could go into it, but it would take a long time. The harm is to do with the quality of life suggested, the use of irrational emotional appeals, the improper use of our emotion. It's a long case, but it exists.

Shields tried to help. 'The case is fundamentally the improper use of emotions, let's put it that way', he said. Sir Harry, present in the Chair, tried to move on. 'I think really the question is this: to what extent does the Authority consider and take this into account?' he asked. But Sir Robert Fraser, who now intervened, was clearly becoming impatient. Of course, he could have said, truthfully, the Authority did take such matters into account. All advertisements were in reality vetted by officials, and, if necessary, by appropriate committees. Instead, he chose to pick an argument.

> *Fraser*:
> Mr. Hoggart knows that I know fairly precisely what is in his mind about this, and what he believes, and he also knows that I don't agree with him.
> *Chairman*:
> I'm sorry, but Mr. Hoggart has not been putting what is in *his* mind, Sir Robert.
> *Fraser*:
> Then forgive me.
> *Chairman*:
> It is rather important, you see.
> *Fraser*:
> Mr. Hoggart has become a very articulate exponent of this particular line of criticism. You warned us that these various points of view would be put to us, but that we should not assume that they were coming from the committee as such.

Fraser did then answer Sir Harry's question. He didn't recall the Authority ever discussing this particular matter. There was no need, he went on. Although there were advertisements he didn't like, some of those perhaps 'the same ones that Mr. Hoggart and other members didn't like', but on the whole he was unworried by the image presented:

> I see a community which is sociable, friendly, rather gay, rather agreeable ... it's no bad thing that housewives should be presented with the general idea that there's something to be said for having a gay, clean, bright and happy home ... for presenting to young girls the idea that they might as well look as pretty and agreeable as possible... it's a good thing to encourage the general idea that one should look nice, and clean one's teeth, and so on.

Advertising was on the side of good, not evil. If television advertising stopped, said Fraser, he would think that social standards would be lower, not higher.

Hoggart returned to the attack.

> There was never any question, was there, Sir Robert, that anybody objected to advertisements asking us to clean our teeth more often. You know as well as I do the case is much more subtle than that. I think the short answer is that you don't accept the case at all?

That, agreed Fraser, was the short answer. But Sir Harry was reluctant to give up hope of forging some kind of agreement.

> *Chairman*:
> The question of whether you've considered it and rejected it is one thing; the question of whether you've considered it at all is another thing. I'm not quite sure whether you have or have not given general consideration to that sort of question, the philosophy of it?
> *Fraser*:
> Sir Harry, there has never been a discussion at the Authority at all comparable with the discussion we've been having for the last half-hour.

The mutual antipathy between Fraser and Hoggart was clearly damaging the ITA's chances - if it still had any - of getting a favourable verdict from the Committee. But that possibility must have seemed even more remote after a confrontation the following month, in September, when the ITA, nervelessly, challenged the core belief shared by the Committee and nearly all its witnesses from outside the industry. This was, as we have seen, that television was a powerful moral agent which society urgently needed to control. Sir Harry began the exchange, with, this time, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, the ITA chairman.

> *Chairman:*
> It has been put to us by a great many people that television services will be a main factor in the future, perhaps *the* main factor, in determining the values and the moral attitudes of our society in the next decades. Would you dissent from that at all?

Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick:
I would say that it's an over-simplification. I think to some extent television, like the literature of the day, or the drama of the day, is a mirror of the society in which you live. Playwrights in the Restoration period wrote plays which reflected the society in which they lived, and that I think has been true of all countries in all ages, and you cannot by ukase, decree, make playwrights write plays which you consider represent the values which society should esteem. I think therefore, if I may say so, that it seems to me an over-simplification of the problem. [136]

Grenfell wanted to know if Kirkpatrick agreed that television's access to the home meant that there was 'quite a new problem...different from anything which has ever happened before in the history of the world'. Again, Kirkpatrick declared that creative artists throughout history have been the mirror of the society in which they lived, and art a reflection of that society. 'You cannot, by ukase, direct artists'. Was television an art? Yes it was, said Kirkpatrick.

Sir Harry returned to put his question again, and gave Sir Ivone another chance to produce an acceptable answer. The resultant exchange reveals the width of the philosophical gap between the Committee and those who spoke for ITV.

Chairman:
What I was asking was whether you felt, for better or for worse, that television will be a main factor, perhaps the main factor, in determining the values and the moral attitudes of our society in the next decade. I was not going the long further step of saying that by some ukase we should settle what it should be.
Kirkpatrick:
No, perhaps I cut a corner there. What I meant was that to some extent society will be what it is, whether you suppress television or whether you do not, and the influence of television would be more marginal than is suggested in the dictum you quoted.
Chairman:
What do you think would be the main factor in determining the values and moral attitudes of our society, then, if it were not television?
Kirkpatrick:
I think history shows that each society is subject, as every human being is, to a very large variety of influences, and I would hesitate to accept a dictum that society is going to be in any way moulded by television. Of course, television will be one of the influences, but politics have an influence, religion has an influence ... the degree of affluence, or otherwise, in a society obviously have an influence.

Other committee members joined in. Was Sir Ivone really saying, asked Shields, that television was 'unimportant'? No, said Kirkpatrick, it was just that 'Sir Harry's dictum' exaggerated its importance. Again, he listed several other possible factors connected with society and politics. 'Would Sir Ivone agree' asked Davies 'that television might be more significant than these other

[136] TNA: HO244/41, extracts are taken from transcript of ITA oral evidence, September 5, 1961, pp. 2/6.

factors?' 'Yes', said Kirkpatrick, he would go 'as far as that'. It wasn't far enough. 'Significantly more significant?' insisted Davies. Kirkpatrick didn't answer.

Clinging to the ideal of consensus, Sir Harry gave Kirkpatrick yet another chance:

> *Chairman:*
> May I put it this way: do you feel that the television services can be a useful tool in bringing about the kind of society which pretty well everybody would really like to see?
> *Kirkpatrick:*
> I think they can be. That's why I mentioned the difficulty of proceeding by ukase. I think they can certainly be made so, but you still have to rely on the creative capacity of men who are members of the society in which they live, and therefore to that extent mirrors of that society.

The lines of battle were laid down; if television was, at least potentially, a source for evil in the way some claimed it was, and in the way the Committee was minded to accept, it was too important to be left to the market-place. If it did no more than mirror society, then the ITA had nothing for which it needed to apologise. In which case, its cause was lost with the Committee.

Although he was there, Hoggart played little part in this last exchange. But it lodged firmly in his mind. During the Christmas holidays that year, he spent, he says, ten hours ('it should have been twenty') constructing a long handwritten note to Lawrence, which was laboriously transcribed in the Secretariat. Among many other points, he agreed that television is a mirror much of the time.

> It shows a society to itself. Yet even if television were a mirror all the time, this would not absolve the broadcasters of responsibility, for a mirror is not neutral. A mirror reinforces existing assumptions, merely by reflecting them as assumptions. *(All underlinings in original)*

He suggested that if Lawrence wanted the Report to focus on the ITA's refusal to see television as anything other than a mirror, he might look at:

> the old Romantic poets' image (see Abrams' book of this name): The Mirror and the Lamp.[137] The Mirror reflects back what society shows it; the lamp points to good or ill ways to go...Television has to choose...it can't choose not to choose. For to choose not to choose is itself a positive

[137] M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York; O.U.P., 1953). The preface (p.viii) explains: 'The title of the book identifies two common and antithetic metaphors of mind, one comparing the mind to a reflector of external objects, the other to a radiant projector which makes a contribution to the object it perceives. The first of these was characteristic of much of the thinking from Plato to the eighteenth century; the second typifies the prevailing romantic conception of the poetic mind'. An extract from 'The prelude' (Wordsworth) is quoted: 'An auxiliar light/ Came from my mind which on the setting sun / Bestow'd new splendour'. Neither Plato, nor Wordsworth, nor the American scholar himself, could have expected to be quoted in a debate about British television in 1961.

> choice. And - in that case - probably - an ill choice. It is to say "I am a mirror but not a lamp" and to forget that the mirror is not neutral but a positive reinforcing agent (v. Kirkpatrick).[138]

In the end, the image of the mirror and the lamp did not feature in the Report.

(vi): **Deciding the future of ITV**

By July 1961, the Committee was already behind schedule, and the need to begin considering its conclusions was becoming urgent. Later in the year, when, as we will see, some of the Committee, not least the Chairman, were becoming increasingly concerned about the radical re-structuring of television that their evidence seemed to demand, Lawrence was to circulate a paper designed to stiffen members' resolve. 'Informed opinion' he told them 'expected something momentous from the Committee'. The Evening Standard had called Sir Harry, he reminded them, 'the man destined to have the greatest influence on British family life in the next decade - barring Khrushchev and Selwyn Lloyd' (then still Macmillan's Chancellor).

Initially, a three-day meeting was scheduled over a weekend in Sir Harry's home in Lancashire. so that decisions could begin to be made. But it was not to be all work and no play. The flavour of the occasion is caught in a rare description of the Committee at work in a letter from Joyce Grenfell to a friend. She writes that she travelled to Liverpool by train overnight, had breakfast at the Adelphi (with Dr. Smith-Rose) 'then the Pilkington firm Rolls fetched us and we rolled to St. Helens'.

> We had lunch Friday and Saturday in the Directors' dining-room at Pilkington's. Delicious food. We worked from 2-4.30, 5-6.30, 8-10 on Friday. And Saturday 9.30-11.00, then saw round the glass works... fascinating... we were supposed to start work again at 3.30, but Christine Truman was playing Angela Mortimer [at Wimbledon] and we had to see that. Work went on till 6.45, dinner, ping-pong for some, talk for me with two others equally idle, and back to the Fleece to bed. I slept as dead both nights. Yesterday [Sunday] we only worked from 10-1.00, and I must say we did a lot of work and have come to two or three final decisions. Secret, of course![139]

On this occasion Sir Harry's diaries also reveal slightly more about the Committee at work than they normally do. He refers to 'a very hard day's work' on the Friday, 'useful, but argumentative after dinner'. On the Saturday he writes of 'another very busy Committee day but with four hours' break seeing the glassworks. Also wonderful Wimbledon finals'. Characteristically, he then gives

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[138] TNA: HO244/236, documents dated December 23 and 27, 1961.
[139] Grenfell papers: LP9/1/1, letter dated July 10, 1961.

the scores of a tennis tournament involving his wife and step-daughter before adding 'some very useful papers and no dissension at all'. On Sunday he writes: 'Tiring Committee morning, but useful. Then after lunch dispersed, with several sets of tennis. A very happy, very useful weekend'. [140] He failed to mention that Joyce had joined the tennis party. 'It was fun', she wrote, 'I wasn't very good, but it was cool and pleasant'.

The 'useful' papers Sir Harry referred to included one from Lawrence on the crucial matters high on the agenda for the weekend, 'the constitutional basis of broadcasting' and the constitution of the ITA. On the former topic he had written, doubtless recalling his earlier paper:

> Because of the nature of the power they are given, and because it can only be given to a few, broadcasting authorities are in a privileged position. This privilege brings with it responsibilities, the most important of which... is the duty to provide education and information as well as entertainment ...and responsibility for setting the cultural standards of the community.[141]

After the 'hard work' and the 'argumentative' evening, the Committee agreed with Lawrence. The minutes, which, of course, he wrote, included the following:

> Broadcasting authorities were given highly privileged access to a scarce but pervasive, persuasive and dominant means of communication. It was for this reason, if for none other, that their duty was to provide a comprehensive service ... it was agreed that the immense privilege of access to the medium carried with it a responsibility for the cultural standards of the community, a responsibility which paralleled the obligation to provide a comprehensive service.[142]

And it was further agreed that something about 'disseminating information, education and entertainment' - as in the BBC's Charter - should be part of any new legislation on ITV. On the constitution of the ITA, Lawrence had written in his note circulated ahead of the meeting:

> This is the first ever review of independent television. It is therefore the more necessary to consider whether any and, if so, what changes are needed in its essential nature ... the main questions are: (1) is the duality Authority/Programme Companies to continue? (2) If so, are the powers and functions of each to remain the same, or to be changed? (3) If they are to be changed, how?

As we know, Lawrence was himself convinced that changes to the structure would be necessary, such as he was about to propose. He added a footnote in which there was the first mention in the Committee's papers of the suggestion for the future of ITV made originally in the Fabian Society

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[140] Pilkington Diary: entries, July 7,8,9, 1961.
[141] TNA: HO 244/70 (BS/Sec/91)
[142] TNA: HO 244/2, minutes of meeting, July 7, 1961, Windle Hall..

pamphlet by Christopher Mayhew.[143] Lawrence, of course, writing answers to parliamentary questions on broadcasting policy, would have been entirely familiar with the Fabian pamphlet, though he made no mention of it, or of Mayhew.

> Note: The suggestion has been made that the ITA and not the contractors should sell advertising time. This would, of course, involve an organic change in the nature of ITV. If the changes are needed, does the Committee think that they require a new principle of this kind; or would it suffice to make adjustments to structure which do not require a new principle? [144]

The minutes record that the Committee recognised that 'the recurring theme' of the evidence submitted to them was that 'the companies were too strong, and the Authority too weak'. The decision, for the time being, was that the 'two-tier' structure of ITV should be maintained, but with the Authority strengthened. Doubtless, some members of the Committee would, at least, have cast an eye over the proposal for a strengthened ITA from 'a group of prominent Conservatives', which had been submitted as written evidence. Lawrence has said that he has no recollection of ever having read it.[145] However, it is quoted in the Report.[146] It is in fact extremely likely that he or others would have looked at it by this time, and that support for the idea had come from such a source must have increased its acceptability. The more radical suggestion that the ITA should both sell advertising time, and commission the programmes, was, according to the minutes, 'attractive'. Lawrence's paper continued:

> It would shift the balance of power decisively in favour of the Authority; it would attach the sales function in ITV to that part of it which would be least likely to sacrifice a better public service of broadcasting to profitability; it would tend to reduce excessive profits, and to divert them to the public purse; and it should go a long way towards solving the networking problem. On the other hand, it would have to be shown that the system would be workable; and it would certainly provoke bitter opposition

(vii): 'Have fun now you are one'; Make-your-mind-up-time

On September 20, 1961, the Committee celebrated the anniversary of its first full meeting, an occasion particularly marked by Joyce Grenfell.

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[143] Mayhew, *Commercial Television - What is to be Done?*. His pamphlet was submitted as written evidence to the Committee in November 1960 (Cmnd. 1819, pp 1135-1139).
[144] TNA: HO 244/6 (BC/Sec/91).
[145] Personal interview, March 20, 2002.
[146] Cmnd. 1753, para. 81.

> I found a card saying 'Have fun now you are one', and put it at Harry's place in the Conference Room together with three tins of boiled sweets for us all to share. It was also Elwyn's birthday. A lot of singing went on. We toasted ourselves and Elwyn - in boiled sweets.[147]

One week later, the Committee met for another three-day weekend, this time at a Hall of Residence at Leicester University - Hoggart was still teaching there - with the aim, as Sir Harry put it in his opening remarks, of reaching 'positive conclusions on as many matters as possible'.[148] In fact, on the opening day, despite Sir Harry's diary entry referring to 'eight hours of Committee - pretty fair progress and harmony',[149] little was decided. Taking issue with the ITA, the Committee reaffirmed its view that the Broadcasting Authorities 'had a responsibility for the cultural standards of the community and for leading public taste', [150] and noted that the BBC's concept of its role 'resulted in a much better balanced programme' than ITV's.

> It seemed incontrovertible that the range of subjects treated, and consequently, the number of 'serious' programmes put on in peak viewing hours was much greater in the case of the BBC than in the case of ITV.[151]

And, because of the dominance of 'the big four', ITV's regional companies 'had not come up to the expectations which its 'plural' structure and resources might have been thought to hold out'.[152]

On the following day, much time was given to ITV's quiz programmes. Sir Harry's diary reads: 'Nasty cold. Very tiring day. Some progress but slow and difficult ... hard to remain calm and patient'.[153] Grenfell's picture is altogether different:

> Harry wore a thick-knit string-coloured sweater over short-sleeved shirt. No tie. Leaped through the window during coffee-break without his sweater into cold wind. I became mum and made him go back to get it. I think he was glad. Behaves as if common-sense rules didn't apply to him. We discussed prizes in cash or kind for Quiz Shows on ITV. Harry summed up the Committee's views. The prizes should be trivial, but the programmes shouldn't.[154]

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[147] Grenfell Diary entry September 20, 1961, quoted in Joyce Grenfell, *In Pleasant Places* (London: Macdonald, 2nd. edn., 1980), p.138.
[148] TNA: HO 244/2, minutes of meeting September 29, 1961, p.1.
[149] Pilkington Diary: entry, September 29, 1961.
[150] TNA: HO 244/2,minutes of meeting September 29,1961, p.4.
[151] Ibid, p.6.
[152] Ibid, p.8.
[153] Pilkington Diary: entry , September 30, 1961,
[154] Grenfell, *In Pleasant Places*, p.138.

Or, as the minutes put it, 'it was the prize and not the performance which should be trivial'. The Committee would 'urge' that interest in the programmes should be 'shifted' towards the element of competition (Sir Harry, we may remember, was a highly competitive games player).[155]

Next, advertising. Here, several decisions were made. Among them: that there should be less of it; the rules on 'natural breaks' should be reinforced and better policed; television advertising should be judged by standards suitable for a publicly-regulated medium with direct access to families; 'there could be no compromise on false claims'; advertising magazines should be prohibited; and, 'on advertisements which appealed to human weakness', it must be made clear that these were 'wholly regrettable' as 'the response they prompted' would 'on the most moderate assessment, mark a decline in national character'.[156]

It was on Sunday morning, October 1, that discussion turned to 'the constitution and organization' of ITV. In the previous week, Francis Newark had submitted a paper which, Lawrence has agreed, contained ideas derived from the kind of arguments Mayhew had been making, which he, Lawrence, 'might well have' raised in conversations with Newark.[157] The paper, said Newark, formed 'the bones' of what previous discussions - unminuted - had termed 'the Newark thesis'. Sir Harry called it 'destructive, but good' in his diary.[158] In fact, given the premises the Committee had agreed, its logic was devastating, in particular for any who still thought that there might be a case for the preservation of the current system. ITV had failed, said Sir Harry. By now, there can have been little doubt that the Committee would demand that it be totally restructured, as Lawrence had long planned. Nonetheless, once Sir Harry had invited members' views, there was one lone voice which, it seems, spoke up for 'the present system' to be given 'a further opportunity to prove itself'. The minutes retain its owner's anonymity, as well as his or her reluctance to force the issue. The Committee, they declare, 'agreed' that 'a major change was necessary.'[159]

Newark's paper observed that there were two defects in what he called 'the set-up' as laid down in the 1954 Act. First, that the Authority was 'not in a master-servant relationship' with the companies; its control was weak, and it could not exercise it without the risk of depriving a franchise area of the broadcasting service the Authority was bound to provide. Secondly, that

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155 TNA: HO 244/2 minutes of meeting, September 30, 1961, pp.1/3.
156 Ibid, pp.3/9.
157 Personal interview, March 20, 2002.
158 Pilkington Diary: entry, October 1, 1961.
159 TNA: HO 244/2, minutes meeting October 1, 1961, pp.1/3.

service had to be financed by advertising revenue, but raising it was 'in the entire control' of the companies. The net result was:

(i) A hybrid organization of a truly remarkable kind. You have the consumers (the public) who are thirsty for entertainment. The entertainment is provided by companies ... through an intermediary, the Authority, [which] has not the wherewithal to remunerate them ...The consumers are not going to pay [so] the parasitic element of advertising is grafted on [but] the advertisers are the one set of people who have no interest in the main purpose of the operation.

(ii) An organization in which there is an inevitable disparity of purpose between the summit of the organization and the "centre of gravity" (those engaged in producing the commodity in which the undertaking deals) ...

Whereas the purpose of the Act was to provide an alternative television programme which would be financed through advertising, the result has been to make independent television an advertising business which is supported through the medium of entertainment.

'The consequences of the set-up', according to Newark, were 'all the shortcomings, real or alleged' about which the Committee had heard. Finally, he offered his remedy:

The Act of 1954 should be amended to:-

(i) put the Authority in control of networking, so as to enable it to plan a national ITV programme.
(ii) provide that the Authority should provide the service by contracting with programme companies to supply it with individual programmes.
(iii) enable the Authority to raise revenue by selling advertising time.[160]

In other words, the 'attractive' suggestion based on the Mayhew plan brought up by Lawrence at the St. Helens meeting at the beginning of July.

The meeting in Leicester ended without, in fact, any decision on 'the Newark thesis' . All that was agreed was that it should, at Sir Harry's insistence, be examined 'rigorously', but it was clear that the Committee had talked itself into a position from which retreat might now seem unimaginable.[161] Within the last few weeks, first Fraser, and then Kirkpatrick, had failed to sue for peace on behalf of the ITA. They had resolutely taken a stand which offended against the conventional wisdom of the educated class in general, and the Committee in particular; the gap between the ITA and the Committee had become too wide to bridge.[162] And now, from what

[160] TNA: HO 244/22 (BC/574), note from Professor Newark dated September 25, 1961. The full text is attached as Appendix D.
[161] TNA: HO 244/2, minutes of meeting October 1, 1961, pp.3/5.
[162] Having good contacts with journalists, the Conservative Party and Government, the ITA officials were doubtless relying on eventually getting support for their stance.

should have been a reliably conservative source, had come the most cogently argued case for the most radical change. Compromise had become only a remote possibility. For Sir Harry personally, deeply conservative at heart, a man who above all loved consensus and hated argument, there was now the unpleasant prospect of a row, not inside the Committee but outside.

The meeting had, in fact, instructed Lawrence to prepare two papers, one which would 'work out the proposal in sufficient detail' and another on possible alternatives.[163] There was no stinting on the detail. The first paper he produced contained some five thousand words.[164] As a comparison, the version prepared eventually for the Report, clearly based on his paper, amounted, perhaps, to some two thousand.[165] He re-stated the case at some length, he detailed a possible new (regional) structure, the provisions for central programme planning, for the commissioning of programmes from a panel of companies appointed by the ITA, for local programmes, news and education, and the sale and scrutiny of advertising. The new ITA would have a positive and creative function (it would even make some programmes of its own); there would be more minority items, 'especially at peak hours', and experiment would be encouraged. In due course, it could even look forward to a second channel. Lawrence listed possible objections, eleven of them, and answered them, mostly plausibly, again at length.

Among them:

> 'The scheme is overcomplicated'.
> It's fundamentally simple, and less complicated than present arrangements.
> 'It would give too much responsibility for programmes to bureaucrats'
> Those planning programmes now weren't producers but company bureaucrats. Under the new system, producers wouldn't have profit-driven companies between them and the new creative people at the ITA who would share their interest in 'good' programmes.
> 'It would be another BBC'
> Ideas and programmes would still come from different companies; staff and traditions would be different.
> 'Advertisers would get a worse service'
> Not necessarily, and serving advertisers is a secondary aim of ITV, anyway.
> And, perhaps, politically most threatening:
> 'Programmes now popular will be taken off'.

Anticipating the row which indeed did follow, Lawrence wrote:

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[163] TNA: HO 244/2.minutes of meeting October 1, 1961, p.6.
[164] TNA: HO 244/7 (BC/Sec/133).
[165] Cmnd.1753, pp. 170/171.

> The press, and politicians, may make capital by saying the scheme is an attempt to replace very popular programmes with egg-head ones. But the change is not intended to do this - indeed many of the existing items will remain. The purpose - or one purpose - is rather to raise the standard of the programmes; not, for example, to abolish all quizzes, but to make them less trivial. [166]

The second paper was much shorter. Lawrence, again, reiterated the faults of the present system, those Newark had included and some others, and came up with three alternatives. The present structure could be retained, but with the Authority given control over arrangements for networking, or with company areas rationalised and made equal in size, or with the Authority given the right to sell advertising time only for *networked* programmes, i.e. not those transmitted by just one company. But only the Newark plan would solve *all* the problems.[167]

The increasingly urgent tone of another paper, dated November 2, does suggest that some voices were still being heard to predict political difficulties, and that Lawrence feared that the Committee still needed persuading. 'There is a tendency to adduce political arguments', he wrote. 'These are not for the Committee ... but for the Government - which deliberately avoided appointing politicians' (underlining in original). Politicians, Lawrence may have recognised, would have more reason to be concerned about the large numbers in the electorate who *liked* 'trivial' quiz programmes, the more 'trivial', probably, the better. If the scheme for ITV was rejected, the Report would have to say either that the present system cannot be bettered, or show that some other scheme is preferable. 'But this cannot be done.' [168]

That paper was drawn up for another weekend meeting, this time held at what Hoggart called 'a modest hotel' in Hove.[169] Sir Harry's diary for November 3 reads: 'To Brighton on gorgeous autumn day for good beginning to weekend conference including some bright ideas of my own (not well received by Lawrence).' [170]

There is no record of that discussion with Lawrence, and nowhere an account of what those ideas were. On November 3, the Committee discussed only such largely non-contentious issues as the future role of Advisory Bodies on religion and education.[171]

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[166] TNA: HO 244/7, BC/Sec/133, p.12.
[167] TNA: HO 244/7 (BC/Sec/134), pp.1/3
[168] TNA: HO 244/256, note from Lawrence dated November 2, 1961.
[169] Hoggart, *A Life Imagined*, p.70.
[170] Pilkington Diary: entry, November 3, 1961. It ends, characteristically: 'Bar Billiards and walk in evening'.
[171] TNA: HO 244/2, minutes of meeting November 3, 1961.

Hoggart has given a dramatic picture of the meeting on the following day. The Committee, he says, had no doubt, by then, that 'the most radical proposal' for ITV was the right one.

> Sir Harry then did as a chairman should at such a time. He told us that the proposal would not find favour with the government and might cause the report as a whole to be discredited. Did we think the proposal so right, so necessary for the better future of broadcasting, that we still wished to make it? Or did we wish to amend it into a proposal more likely to be acceptable to government? Without hesitation or dissent, we said we wished to go for the radical proposal; also with no hesitation, the chairman said: so be it [172].

The reality was, however, that Sir Harry was not as resolute as Hoggart suggests. An implication of the above passage is that Sir Harry had himself at least considered the possibility of a proposal 'more acceptable to the Government'. Had that been one of his 'bright ideas'? In fact, Sir Harry's opening speech, as minuted, made no mention of the Government; it referred only to 'various sectional interests' in broadcasting which would 'object violently' to some of the Report's conclusions. The meeting in Leicester, he said, had agreed 'provisionally' that it would propose something like the scheme laid out in the Newark paper, and that Lawrence's paper 'went a long way to show that [it] would be workable'. Members might now 'wish to suggest further points for consideration'. He himself was concerned that the scheme, if adopted, could lead to suggestions that the BBC should also be financed by advertising.[173] No details of his reasoning are given, but logically, it might have been thought, if a satisfactory result could be obtained on ITV while it remained funded by advertising, why could not that also apply to the BBC? Perhaps the point was being made in the hope that it might lead to an agreement to moderate the radicalism of the proposal for ITV.

The discussion, in which no objections to the scheme were in fact recorded, was complicated by a case put by Collison that there should be an Advertising Revenue Board which would collect the money from the advertisers and pass it on to the ITA. The idea was to distance advertisers even further from programme production and scheduling, and to reduce the danger of them applying pressure on programme-makers. It was, for the time being, left on the table, and, as we have seen, later withdrawn.[174] Discussion ended with Sir Harry concluding that the Committee had, indeed,

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[172] Hoggart, *A Life Imagined,* p.70.

[173] TNA: HO 244/2, minutes of meeting November 4, 1961. (Hoggart's account says this meeting took place on the Sunday - it was in fact on the previous day, Saturday.)

[174] See page 83 above. Collison finally withdrew his proposal at the meeting on December 6, 1961, declaring that 'he had come to the conclusion that the fault lay, basically, in the concept of commercial broadcasting'. Given that the Committee's terms of reference 'effectively precluded it from challenging

thought the Newark plan, as worked out by Lawrence, 'practicable'. But, he reminded members, "this was the first occasion on which [it] had been discussed in detail', and they might still feel 'that points would be capable of modification or improvement'. At the next meeting on November 24, back in London, Sir Harry seemed content to procrastinate further, declaring that there was still time for comments to be made. He had resolved his own two concerns, one about allowing a case for advertising on the BBC,[175] and the other about securing 'the continued service and enthusiasm of the present companies'. But, as if to reassure himself and others, he pointed out that 'the proper comparison was not with the present dispensation ... but with other sets of proposals aimed at remedying the defects and deficiencies of the present system'. And those would have to 'involve specific controls' which would be 'numerous and inhibiting', and have to include 'some form of profit limitation'.

No further comments, it seems, were offered. It was, finally, noted that

> the Chairman...understood the view of the Committee to be that the Report should recommend a fundamental change in the constitution and organization of independent television, and, subject to points of detail, the change should be that proposed in BC/Sec/133.[the Mayhew/Newark/Lawrence plan].[176]

Was it around this time that Sir Harry had, as Lawrence has claimed, attempted, with Hudson, to contrive some sort of compromise behind his back? [177] Certainly, Sir Harry's relations with Lawrence were now deteriorating. In the very first diary entry in which he made any comment on Lawrence at all, he noted on November 21: 'Very troublesome day on broadcasting, again having to be quite sharp with Lawrence'. Several such entries followed as the work of drafting the Report began. Lawrence was 'again troublesome' on December 1, 'still very difficult' on January 15. On January 18, Sir Harry wrote that he was 'feeling more and more dissatisfied with Lawrence's drafting', and on January 30, there were 'two troublesome hours' with Lawrence.[178]

[that] concept', he accepted that the agreed proposal 'achieved the best chance' of limiting the harm advertising could do.

[175] There were two grounds, he thought, for rebuttal of arguments for advertising on the BBC: (i), that the BBC needed 'the greatest possible financial independence ... to set and maintain standards', and, (ii), that there was a need for one channel 'essentially centralised', and the other 'essentially decentralised'. TNA: HO 244/2, minutes of meeting November 24, 1961, p.10.

[176] TNA: HO 244/2, minutes of meeting November 24, 1961, p11.

[177] See p. 80, above.

[178] Pilkington Diary: dates as above.

On February 1 Sir Harry wrote to Lawrence with his comments on the draft of Chapter V, which was the chapter which included passages on the harm television had done, and on the dangers of 'triviality'. 'We would be wrong', Sir Harry wrote, 'to ignore the evidence constantly put to us of the very large number of viewers who clearly were satisfied, judging by the numbers who watched very many programmes of all kinds'. They had, he reminded Lawrence, received the listings magazine *Television Mail* 'every week for a year' and that gave figures 'of where viewers turn off, or turn on again, as evidence of dissatisfaction or satisfaction'.[179] On February 6, he wrote again, having given more thought to the draft, which, as he pointed out, spoke several times of 'disquiet' about television 'as a whole'. That was, he thought, 'strategically, a great mistake'.

> I have absolutely no doubt that television as a whole has been ... a great invention and a great success. Very many millions of people have had their horizons broadened and their experiences enlarged, very many millions of people get a great deal of perfectly legitimate and innocent entertainment ... To suggest, by omission, that this is not so would give all the ammunition possible to those that will want to make us appear as kill-joys, Third Programme enthusiasts, and defenders only of minority interests ... I would certainly say, without hesitation, that I have found a great deal of enjoyment and interest in many programmes of all kinds ... I am quite adamant that we must not fail to give full and by no means grudging credit in the Report to the achievements of television over the last few years. [180]

And 'several' committee members, he wrote, had spoken to him 'uneasily' about the dangers of seeming prejudiced against television. The two men met the next day, February 7. 'Much worried over Committee', Sir Harry wrote in his diary, 'but 90 minutes good talk with Lawrence and felt much more hopeful'.

It is hard, now, to see, on what grounds Sir Harry was 'hopeful', unless he had changed his mind. Two new paragraphs were inserted at the head of the chapter, which did offer some praise (if a little grudgingly) to some of television's 'fine achievements'. But they ended as follows:

> Praise [for television] was given [in submissions put to us], but only incidentally. Though it was generally said of sound radio: 'This is admirable', none was willing to say it of television.[181]

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[179] TNA: HO 244/265, letter from Sir Harry Pilkington to Lawrence, dated February 1, 1962.
[180] TNA: HO 244/265, letter from Sir Harry Pilkington to Lawrence, dated February 6, 1962.
[181] Cmnd. 1753, p.27. The two paragraphs, in their entirety, read as follows:
'77. Ten years ago, television had already got under way. Until the broadcast of the Coronation in 1953, there was no widespread awareness of the possibilities of television. Since then the broadcaster has learned much about the use of the medium. In some kinds of programmes, in particular, one can point to fine achievements; for example, in some comedy series, in sport programmes, in some variety shows, in several kinds of "hobbies" programmes, in current affairs and "topical magazine" programmes, in the development of the news bulletins themselves, and in some television drama.
78. Nevertheless, many submissions put to us about television on behalf of viewers primarily expressed disquiet and dissatisfaction. Often the critics of television - including even the most severe critics - were at

But that was exactly what Sir Harry had said he hoped that this chapter would say. The game was over, and it seems Lawrence had won. For all that Sir Harry was 'adamant', in the end there remained in the Report ample ammunition for those who wanted to call the Committee 'kill-joys'. But after February 7 there are no more critical references to Lawrence in Sir Harry's diary, and the files contain no more critical letters.

On May 29, the last main day of Committee work, Sir Harry wrote: 'nine difficult hours but ending all well - and quite sad to be ending too'. On publication day, June 27: 'End of wonderful two years of constructive work with wonderful team.' [182] Perhaps he had given up all hope of avoiding a row over ITV. But perhaps he could anticipate widespread agreement with the Committee's recommendation for the third channel to be awarded to the BBC.

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pains to praise the good things in television. But on the whole, it was adverse criticism which formed the substance of nearly all their submissions. Praise was given, but only incidentally. Though it was generally said to us of sound radio: "This is admirable", none was willing to say it of television.'

[182] Pilkington Diary: entries May 29, 1962, June 27, 1962.

Chapter Four: **Pilkington and the BBC**

(i): **Introduction: 'An exercise in psychological warfare'**

Before drawing some final conclusions about the assumptions underlying the Report, and both the press and political reactions it provoked, it is necessary to look at the BBC's attempts to influence it. The Corporation saw its interests being seriously threatened by experiments in pay-as-you-view television, which it initially believed Pilkington would recommend. In any case, it was determined to do whatever was necessary to protect its status as the country's principle instrument of broadcasting, which it felt was in danger if it were not to be granted a second channel.

Hugh Greene became its Director-General early in 1960.[1] According to his biographer, Michael Tracey, Greene knew that he would have to spend most of his first two years in office 'persuading the Pilkington Committee of the virtues of the public service tradition'. Tracey - whose book was based on discussions with Greene and access to his private papers - described the tactics Greene employed:

> At endless dinners and lunches, over drinks at parties, he subtly manoeuvred the conversation to influence those who might possibly themselves influence the thinking of the Committee. Greene set out to create a climate in which the virtues of the BBC, as opposed to the vices of the commercial operation, would become received truth in the minds of not just the members of the Pilkington Committee, but anyone at all who might possibly have influence ... Nothing, but nothing, was left to chance.[2]

Briggs adds that Greene also set out to 'unsell' ITV.

> With this in mind he collected a secret 'Black Book', which assembled data about ITV companies and their connections with each other and with other branches of industry.

The existence of the 'black book' was leaked - Briggs suggests by a disgruntled former executive - to Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, who upbraided Greene about it at a party.[3] Although in his brief 'Apologia pro Vita Mea' Greene made no specific mention of the 'black book' (nor does Tracey), he did describe the operation to influence the Pilkington Committee as 'an exercise in

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[1] He was knighted in 1964, and left the BBC in 1969.

[2] Michael Tracey, *A Variety of Lives: The Biography of Sir Hugh Greene* (London: Bodley Head, 1983), pp.189/190.

[3] Briggs, *History*, vol. 5, p.312, quoting Greene's interview with Frank Gillard for the BBC Oral History Project. The former executive was Tahu Hole, who in March 1960 had been manoeuvred by Greene out of his job as Director of Administration. The close acquaintance of Greene's Chief Assistant with Kirkpatrick suggests that Kirkpatrick's likely reaction might have been anticipated. See page 126 below.

psychological warfare' and was happy to 'confess' that he had 'found [his] experience as Head of Psychological Warfare in Malaya in the early 1950s extremely useful'.[4] Many of his readers would have assumed he was joking.

(ii): **Feeding the Hungry Sheep**

The BBC's handbook for 1960, published in January, still put radio first. As it pointed out, over the past year the BBC had broadcast twenty thousand hours of radio programmes as opposed to three thousand hours of television.[5] But, as it also declared:

> Television has added an immediacy and intimacy which bring a tremendous expansion of individual experience. Reading or listening has been followed by seeing for yourself. It is a fallacy to imagine that the mass audience is only interested in 'entertainment'; television 'talks', for which there is an audience running at times into eight figures, are entertainment no less than leg shows, although their content may - or should be - more informative.[6]

An internal document prepared by the Controller of Programmes Television in November 1960 told a slightly different story. It listed 'serious' BBC programmes which had done well in ratings terms since ITV achieved national coverage in 1956. The only 'talks' programme that had achieved 'eight figures' was *Your Life in their Hands*, a feature built around a heart operation transmitted live in February 1958 to an audience of ten million people. It narrowly beat *Without Love*, described as 'a drama-documentary on prostitution', seen in December 1956 by nine-and-a-half million people. Not 'leg-shows' perhaps, but clearly neither programme was without either morbid or prurient appeal.[7]

Despite the handbook's determinedly positive tone, Tracey pointed out that the reality for Greene was 'that in terms of the size of its audience, the BBC had been doing disastrously. At the end of the 1950s its share was down to only twenty-seven per cent'. That figure was from its own audience research department, which many argued overestimated the size of the BBC audience.[8]

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[4] Sir Hugh Greene, 'Apologia pro Vita Mea' in *The Third Floor Front: A View of Broadcasting in the Sixties* (London: Bodley Head, 1969) p.131.
[5] *The BBC Handbook 1960* (London: BBC, 1960) p.21.
[6] Ibid, p.54.
[7] BBC WAC: T16/326/2 paper from Kenneth Adam to Maurice Farquharson, November 10 1960.
[8] Tracey, *A Variety of Lives*, p.186. Tracey points out however that in the first week of January 1960 the figure did actually reach 42 per cent.

The previous November, that department had carried out a survey into the 'images' of the BBC and ITV. The sample, it said, was 'small and confined to the London area'; and 'there was reason to think that the most unselective viewer was under-represented'.

It offered respondents a list of adjectives and asked which they thought might apply to the BBC and which to ITV. Ninety-five per cent of them thought the BBC was 'educational', ninety-two per cent 'British', 'honest', and 'polite', and seventy per cent 'official'.[9] But if many were choosing not to watch, something, clearly, had to be done. As Greene recalled in his 'Apologia', why should viewers pay a licence fee if they were not using the BBC?

> I therefore told the television service that without any abandonment of BBC standards they must aim at increasing our share of the television audience from its lowest ration of 27:73 to 50:50 by the time the Pilkington Committee reported. That was exactly achieved at the beginning of 1963. Now [in 1968] we are doing even better.[10]

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[9] Some additional findings are reproduced here:

	BBC	ITV		BBC	ITV
'educational'	95	56	'American'	16	83
'British'	92	34	'responsible'	81	42
'honest'	92	62	'natural'	77	63
'polite'	92	49	'slick'	31	72
'free and easy'	40	90	'polished'	72	46
'cultural'	85	29	'cautious'	71	20
'moneymaking'	12	85	'matey'	30	71
'dignified'	83	16	'official'	70	20

BBC WAC: R4/38/1, report from Audience Research Department, November 1959.
The figures represent the proportion of respondents who believed the adjectives were applicable to either the BBC or ITV.

[10] Sir Hugh Greene, 'Apologia' p.132. Briggs quotes BBC figures which claim that in the last quarter of 1962 'of people in areas where there was a choice between the two channels, 52 per cent favoured the BBC,

Later, it was pointed out that, if that ratings success had been achieved without abandoning BBC standards, it might have been because the standards had been modified. By 1964, according to the critic Peter Black, BBC programme controllers appointed by Greene

> [had] ended the pretence that [their] schedules were prepared without reference to what the opposition was doing; accepted the established pattern of concentrating audience-pullers at the beginning of the evening; and, most radical change of all, began to consider the comparative weaknesses and strengths of ITV programmes in terms of their popularity and to try to exploit the weaknesses.[11]

So that, for example, when ITV was transmitting a current affairs programme in mid-evening - such as *This Week* - the BBC would schedule a comedy or a western. Black added that what disappeared from BBC peak-time schedules were 'the marginal shows that appealed to a fairly small audience without bringing compensating prestige', such as programmes on 'handicrafts, archaeology and cooking', precisely the kind of programmes which the Pilkington Committee, and Hoggart in particular, were to see as an essential part of good broadcasting.

The rhetoric of public service broadcasting did not, however, change.

Fortuitously, the twenty-fifth anniversary of BBC television fell in June 1961 while the Committee was sitting. A celebratory dinner addressed by the Prime Minister enabled the BBC's understanding of itself to be put before an audience of powerful and influential men (and a few women). It included the members of the Pilkington Committee, and its secretariat. Macmillan's speech purported to express his fondness for the BBC. Certain that his audience would appreciate the joke, he spoke of his 'feeling of resentment and deprivation' that he was unable to watch BBC television programmes. His employers, he explained, 'never gave him an evening off', so 'not for [him] the joy of half-hours with Hancock, no Dixon, no Maigret, no Chiselbury, no Lone Ranger, no Lenny the Lion'. His union, he said, 'really ought to do something about it'.[12] He went on to

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48 per cent ITV. The comparative figures a year earlier had been 39 per cent and 61 per cent.' Greene attributed the achievement to 'more skilful programme planning'. See Briggs, *History,* vol. 5 , p.313.

[11] Black, *The Mirror in the Corner*, p.141.

[12] BBC WAC: R4/38/16, speeches at 25th Anniversary Dinner, June 21, 1961. The BBC programmes to which Macmillan's speech referred were, in order, a popular situation comedy, two police/detective series, another situation comedy (called *Whacko!,* featuring a comic public school Headmaster and his frequent threat/use of corporal punishment), an imported Western series for children, and a programme featuring a ventriloquist's doll. This may be compared with Harold Wilson's eagerness later in the sixties to let it be known that his favourite television programme was on ITV, the soap opera *Coronation Street,* the nation's top-rating programme. See Des Freedman, 'Modernising the BBC: Wilson's Government and Television

praise minority-appeal programmes on politics and the arts, like *Panorama, Gallery* and *Monitor*, which he was also very unlikely to have seen regularly. Although the politicians present may have occasionally kept an eye on news and current affairs programmes, for most of those celebrating the anniversary that evening, television programmes were to be regulated, administered, and sometimes produced, but rarely to be watched.

In his speech replying to Macmillan, Greene found a source in the poetry of John Milton for a familiar metaphor for the television audience.[13] He had seen, he declared, one much-praised documentary programme, on the BBC, about the progress of television all over the world.

> Running through [it] were shots of people watching television...in some cases the stares seemed of blank incomprehension - and no wonder. One was reminded only too often of the line in *Lycidas:* 'The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed'. It brought home the responsibility that lies with us to ensure that audiences are properly fed. Milton writes too of the 'lean and flashy songs' which the 'bad shepherds' play... It may be thought by some that even we have our quota of lean and flashy songs, but there are other things as well, and the Prime Minister has been kind enough to praise them.[14]

Connoisseurs of the technique of flattering an audience will admire the subtlety with which listeners were presumed to be familiar with *Lycidas*, and then - as if in passing - told who its author was. The BBC hoped, said Greene, to continue to feed the hungry sheep properly for the next twenty-five years. The responsibility would continue to lie with 'us'. Few in the audience would have resisted the flattery, and few would have questioned their right - and the BBC's right - to continue to hold that responsibility.

It was understood that the BBC would see to it that viewers *were* properly fed. Tracey has characterised this as the 'missionary' role of the BBC, which it had operated since its foundation. Greene, he wrote, 'democratised' and 'humanised' it. But it is important to note that that process of democratisation was started only in the year in which Pilkington was appointed. In the work by Peter Black referred to above, he notes that the changes begun in the early 1960s - such as the arrival of *That was the Week That Was* in November 1962, for which Greene took much of the credit - were only completed after the arrival of BBC2 in 1964, when 'the character of BBC1 decisively changed'. With some notable exceptions, 'serious stuff had been shunted out of peak-

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1964-66', *Contemporary British History,* Vol. 15, No. 1 (2001), pp. 21-40, quoting Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), p.267.

[13] For its use by *Socialist Commentary,* see p. 57 above.

[14] BBC WAC: R4/38/16.

time or switched to BBC2'.[15] Although a new generation of controllers and producers were anxious to maximise audiences for their programmes, as Black also wrote, it was only *after* the arrival of BBC2 on the air that BBC1 could adopt a more directly popular approach. While Pilkington was sitting, it was still possible to make claims about the BBC which later might have been properly greeted with some scepticism.

It will be recalled that Reginald Bevins had told J.D. Camacho, the BBC's Editor Current Affairs Sound, in October 1960 that ninety-five per cent of those who would normally be chosen to sit on such a Committee would have been pro-BBC.[16] And as the Committee went to work the evidence mounted that its report was going to be favourable to the Corporation. When its members were given a guided tour of the new Television Centre in February 1961, BBC executives were instructed to listen for and report back on any indications they'd picked up as to how the Committee's opinions were forming. Leonard Miall, the Head of Talks, wrote that he'd managed to have useful conversations with Hoggart, and with the Committee's Assistant Secretary, Stella Fisher.

> Hoggart said that he had expected to be in a minority (the reverse of Selwyn Lloyd on the Beveridge Committee), but has found that the Committee as a whole is strongly pro-BBC. Miss Fisher, the Assistant Secretary, told me that she felt the Committee as a whole was if anything 'too BBC' (this comes from a former private secretary to Earl de la Warr!)[17]

But if there were grounds for optimism within the BBC about the Committee's likely recommendations, there were always pessimists who feared that the outcome might not be so favourable, and who particularly worried about the money. As we have seen, Camacho had also been told that Conservatives were united in declaring it 'unthinkable' that the Government would allow an increase in the licence fee to pay for a second BBC channel. His note to Greene continued:

> [Bevins] had expected the pressure groups to reduce the intensity of their operations with the formation of the committee, but this had not been the case ... the campaign for pay-as-you-view

[15] Black, *The Mirror in the Corner*, p.142.
[16] See page 70, above.
[17] BBC WAC: T16/326/2. Note from Leonard Miall to CPTel, February 20, 1961. Earl de la Warr was the Conservative Postmaster-General at the time of the 1954 Television Act. Sendall credits him with having established in a speech in 1953 that advertising on British television need not bring about anything like the American system of sponsorship. 'First, the BBC remains as it is and nobody need look at anything else if they don't want to ... and advertisers will be no more responsible for the programmes than they are for the news that you read in the press'. Sendall, *ITV in Britain,* vol. 1, p.22.

> television had reached such a pitch that he had had to refer to Cabinet with a recommendation against agreement, which I was allowed to understand ... had been endorsed.[18]

The groups lobbying for subscription television by wire - pay-television or pay-as-you-view - were well-financed and headed by well-connected luminaries. Their prospectuses held out great hope for a new sort of television. Christopher Mayhew's 1959 Fabian pamphlet, which was mentioned in Chapter Two, had described it as 'a very promising and revolutionary idea' with 'an extremely bright future'.[19]

Extracts from the proposal of one of the most actively campaigning groups are given in Appendix E along with an account of the attempts to allow an experiment to be set up while Pilkington was actually sitting, and evidence of the Committee's principled and determined resistance to the proposal, or to any experiment. In the summer of 1960 however, and for some time to follow, the possibility of a system of pay-television being authorised was taken very seriously inside the BBC, although we now know, from documents also in Appendix E, that the Committee was from the beginning steered by its Secretary well away from that path. But if it was to happen senior figures in the BBC feared it would offer serious competition. It would, it was thought, initially challenge the Corporation's traditional coverage of sporting and other events. The point was made in a note that August from David Brown in the Secretariat.

> All outside events of significance and interest will attract PayTV ...once attracted their bargaining position would be stronger than ours and ITV's, if they could negotiate exclusive terms as our contracts lapsed. Exclusivity once granted to them, there is small doubt that much of the audience would follow it, grumble though it might at having to pay.[20]

Within weeks, ignorant at this stage of the attitudes of the Committee, Greene had decided that pay-television was likely to be recommended by Pilkington. Doubtless he was also aware of the skilful and intensive lobbying campaign which Bevins had described to Camacho, and of the suggestion that it had considerable support in the Conservative party, and in the Cabinet itself. In April 1962, the BBC was finally to mount a very strong case against pay-television, principally on the grounds that it would deprive some of its audience - the poorer and the more geographically remote, who either would not be able to afford it or who would be beyond its reach - of programmes they could now see effectively for nothing (having paid the licence fee).[21]

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[18] See p. 47 above.
[19] Mayhew, *Commercial Television: What is to be done?*, pp.21/22. Mayhew was to give personal evidence to the Committee in support of PayTV.
[20] BBC WAC: R4/38/1 Note from David Brown to Harman Grisewood, August 24, 1960.
[21] BBC WAC: R4/38/18 'Pay-television: The case examined', dated April 13 1962. Extracts from it are given in Appendix Five.

But Greene seems to have thought for some time (there is no mention of this in either his book or Tracey's) that as long as it was going to happen, the BBC had to run it. Another note from the secretariat reported to the members of the Board of Management in September1960 that:

> It [is] the Director-General's view that the [Pilkington] Committee of Enquiry was likely to want to make a more positive recommendation than the establishment of a pay-television experiment. The BBC should therefore push hard for a pay-television system under the BBC's editorial control.[22]

The arguments within the BBC were to continue. But far from concentrating on the principle, they were more likely to be concerned with strategy and tactics. A paper for the Board of Management dated a week later from the Assistant Director of Sound Broadcasting, asked - if there was to be some sort of trial system - whether it should be operated by the BBC

> on the grounds that it can better be controlled by a public service organization. Would there be any danger that if the trial failed in our hands it could be claimed that this was simply due to our lack of business experience? How definitely should we express ourselves on the practicability or desirability of pay-television? If we come out strongly against it on either count we are likely to put ourselves out of course if the decision is to go ahead.[23]

For the BBC, its survival had to be its main concern. It saw itself as the main if not the only guarantor of the survival of public service broadcasting, and if the sheep were to continue to be properly fed most of the time, its survival would have to be bought at the expense of one of public service broadcasting's most treasured principles. The paper concluded that, in these circumstances, the BBC should show itself 'willing to collaborate in any experiments or any developments, provided that the interests of public service broadcasting can be safeguarded'.

But if, as Pilkington was later to insist, pay-television was incompatible with the principle that as much as possible should be made available on the air for as many as possible - particularly, perhaps, coverage of 'outside events of interest and significance' - how could that circle be squared? The question was still unresolved when in December 1960 the BBC submitted a memorandum to Pilkington specifically on pay-television. The BBC would oppose any introduction of *radiated* pay-television, which would involve the use of one of the scarce frequencies needed for free-at-the-point-of-viewing television in the foreseeable future. But on

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[22] BBC WAC: R4/38/2 Note from David Brown to members of the Board of Management, September 6, 1960.
[23] BBC WAC: R4/38/2 Paper from R. D'A. Marriott, Assistant Director of Sound Broadcasting, September 14, 1960.

the question of *wired* pay-television, which was much more insistently being proposed, the BBC was less sure.

> It is evident ... that the effects on public service broadcasting of successful pay-television ... could not fail to be very serious indeed ... this is unexplored territory. The Corporation is willing to join in any further study of it that may be thought to be desirable. The Corporation would not support any action the results of which, *in its opinion*, (emphasis added) were calculated to damage or impoverish the public service of television which it provides for the nation as a whole.[24]

The circle was left unsquared; within it, the BBC had as much room for manoeuvre as it could want.[25] However, by April 1962, no BBC involvement of any kind in any way was then even contemplated. There had been no government-sponsored experiment, nor was it likely that Pilkington would suggest one.[26] It was safe for the BBC to oppose it.

(iii): **Public Relations**

Greene made it clear in his 'Apologia' that he saw competition with ITV as a military campaign and 'when one is fighting a campaign one goes out for victory'.[27] As we have seen, he was clear too about the importance of winning the hearts and minds of those with influence. Almost his first task, he wrote, was to 'get the public relations services of the BBC into shape in order to create an atmosphere of public support' for the evidence he was to present to Pilkington. The opposition, however, seems to have been quiescent. The BBC's man in New York, Derek Russell, reported that he'd been drinking with an English public relations man working for ATV in London, who was on a visit to the United States. 'The commercial television people', he was told, as he reported back to Greene, 'were doing no lobbying in connection with the Pilkington Committee', although they knew that the BBC was 'lobbying vigorously', and that 'what appeared in the press was like the top of an iceberg... the BBC was doing far more beneath the surface'. But the ATV man was quite confident that 'ITV would retain and expand its position'.[28]

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[24] Cmnd.1819 , Paper no. 19, BBC Memorandum (No. 4), 'Pay-Television', para.42.
[25] Subscription television was to begin to become widely available in Britain only in the late 1980s with the arrival of cable and satellite channels, though some early experiments were attempted with little success in the 1960s. The development of digital technology in the early 2000s enabled the BBC to offer its own digital services to compete with the proliferation of paid-for channels. They remained free at the point of use. But an increasingly energetic campaign was being waged to switch BBC funding from the licence fee to subscription, still (at the time of writing) successfully resisted by the BBC.
[26] It was, of course, firmly rejected by Pilkington. Cmnd. 1753, paras. 966-1002.
[27] Greene, 'Apologia', p.130.
[28] BBC WAC: R4/46/6, note from Derek Russell to the Secretariat, December 15 1960. The following spring, Russell also reported to London on Sir Harry's visit to New York, accompanied by his wife and

ITV's ability, and desire, to stage a united public relations campaign may have been inherently weak because of the division of responsibilities between the ITA and the companies (and the division of opinion among them). But that was not a problem for the more monolithic BBC. The various departments in the corporation which dealt with the public and public opinion - the Secretariat, the Publicity Department, Audience Research, Publications, the Correspondence Section 'and so on' - were put under the control of one Director at the very centre of the corporation's activities. Greene wrote:

> [He] provided guidance for all the thousands of members of staff of the BBC who are in touch with influential people and influential organisations. I told the staff of the BBC that every single one of them was a public relations officer for the BBC and they would be provided with the necessary information to enable them to do their job.[29]

The man chosen was the Chief Assistant to the Director-General, Harman Grisewood, formerly Head of the Third Programme, who had seen himself as Greene's chief rival for both his present job and his previous one as Director of News and Current Affairs.[30] He was not, however, to be known officially as Director of Public Relations. In fact, for public relations reasons, there were no 'public relations officers' at all in the BBC. In a letter to Lord Reith in 1961, Greene explained:

> [Grisewood] has not got the title - [Director of Public Relations] - because nowadays the term 'public relations' tends to arouse rather hostile reactions, but he has all the functions.[31]

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several Committee members. Russell detailed with some satisfaction that Sir Harry had told him of 'a not entirely satisfactory meeting' with CBS. Sir Harry was disturbed to discover that the CBS President, James Aubrey, had never actually heard of him or the Committee. At a British Information Services lunch, there had been an uneasy exchange with Robert Sarnoff, President of NBC. Sarnoff had asked, somewhat sharply, whether the committee was 'really in touch with public opinion as distinct from the numerous groups which had given evidence... was the Committee planning to undertake any special research?' 'Sir Harry replied that no special research was contemplated. His committee was widely representative and the members were in touch with many aspects of public life and opinion'. The obvious implication for the BBC in London was that the BBC would derive advantage from Sir Harry's contacts with American commercial television. Russell concluded: 'Lady Pilkington clearly enjoyed the whole visit enormously. We were instrumental in putting her in touch with a reputable furrier and she emerged radiant in a mink stole obtained at a substantial discount'. BBC WAC: T16/326.3, letter from Derek Russell, June 5, 1961. Sir Harry's diary for June 4 recorded 'a lovely cocktail party at Russells'. The following day's entry mentioned his wife's 'lovely mink'.

[29] Greene, 'Apologia', p. 131. Nowhere in this passage is Grisewood named as the man who had the job.

[30] Tracey quotes an unsourced Sir Ian Jacob as saying, of Greene's appointment as Director of News and Current Affairs in 1958, that 'Harman thought he should have been [a candidate], but nobody but a lunatic would have put him there. I'm terribly fond of him, but he hasn't got the nervous fibre for the top job. It's a very tough business'. Tracey, *A Variety of Lives*, p. 182.

[31] BBC WAC: R4/46/15, letter to Lord Reith from Hugh Greene, June 6, 1961.

It may be that Grisewood's principal qualification for the job was that he had been a wartime assistant to Ivone Kirkpatrick, now of course the enemy at the ITA.[32] Grisewood's autobiography, published in 1968 after his retirement, which discreetly, and unfortunately for the historian, stops in 1956, described Kirkpatrick as 'formidable...impressive...combative...independent.' 'I was', he wrote, 'devoted to him'.[33] Grisewood was also to write that there was 'very little of the diplomat in his manner.'

> He thought the arts of flattery were all very well among foreigners, but for the British were a waste of time. He won his points by attack rather than by persuasion. Military brusqueries came easier to him than urbanity.[34]

At crucial points in the story, Kirkpatrick's manner of attack was to lose him points rather than win them, as, for instance, in his dispute with the Committee during the ITA's oral evidence.[35] Grisewood's familiarity with Kirkpatrick's characteristically combative attitudes may have led both him and Greene to believe that the brusquer he was, or the more he could be made to lose his temper in public or semi-public - as over the incident of the 'black book' - the better for the BBC.

Under Grisewood, all possible contacts were used to find support for the BBC. He chaired regular meetings of departmental heads to report progress on liaison with outside bodies. In November 1960, one such meeting heard reports that the Editor of Women's' Programmes was in touch with all the women's' organizations who were to give evidence, and the Head of Educational Broadcasting with a variety of educational bodies, including a group of Headmasters of northern public schools, who were pressing the Headmasters' Conference to support the BBC. At the same meeting, the Deputy Head of Religious Broadcasting reported that the British Council of Churches was to submit evidence supporting the BBC. Additionally, he had been to see officials of the YWCA. There was no doubt 'that they are very pro-BBC and I think that after our discussion they are aware that it is necessary for them to express this opinion forcibly'.[36] Arms were clearly being twisted, even perhaps when there was little need. But clearly for Greene and

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[32] In 1941 Kirkpatrick had been appointed initially as Foreign Office adviser to the BBC, then as Controller European Services. Grisewood was Assistant Controller from 1941 until 1944. Greene worked under both of them as head of the German section. Tracey says Greene 'did not personally like Kirkpatrick because he was too much Munich minded'. Tracey, *A Variety of Lives*, p.77.

[33] Harman Grisewood, *One Thing at a Time* (London: Hutchinson, 1968), pp. 139-148.

[34] Ibid, p.134.

[35] See pp. 101-102, above. See also pp. 195-196, below, on Kirkpatrick's newspaper article in *The Times* attacking Bevins' handling of the debates around the 1963 Act, and p. 52, above, for Sendall's assessment of his character.

[36] BBC WAC: R4/46/2, note from Deputy Head, Religious Broadcasting to Head, Religious Broadcasting, November 18, 1960; minutes of meeting November 22 1960.

Grisewood, any kind of complacency was out of the question. The enemy was to be comprehensively defeated on all fronts.

The Assistant Head of Outside Broadcasts Sound, Robert Hudson, circulated his producers, also in November:

> We have been asked to consider urgently which sporting organizations are likely to write in a favourable vein to the Pilkington Committee ... would you consider which of the sporting organizations with whom you deal are likely to support us and I will discuss the matter with you, when we will decide how to make contact in each case.[37]

On the same day, he wrote to Rex Alston, the cricket commentator.

> This is to remind you that when you speak to Billy Griffith at Lord's you are going to mention the question of the Pilkington Committee. What is wanted, from our point of view, is an expression of opinion by the MCC to the effect that they approve the present system of public service broadcasting and would not welcome any other method.[38]

Within a fortnight, however, tactics had changed. Hudson wrote again to his producers:

> As you know, we have abandoned the idea of making direct requests to sporting organizations inviting them to give evidence to the Committee on Broadcasting. It is felt, however, that we can do a certain amount unofficially, particularly with sports which have not hitherto had much time on the air.[39]

It was over the signature of Greene himself that a letter was sent in December to Sir Stanley Rous, who was a former Chairman of the Football Association, and now chaired the Central Council of Physical Recreation. It is a valuable example of the style of such appeals, combining an air of knowingness with a mixture of flattery, bribery and special pleading. Many organizations, said the letter, had made submissions arguing in favour of non-commercial broadcasting.

> We believe this is true of sport. But as yet we know of no sporting organization which has made this point to the Committee ... something would be lacking if [the Committee] did not hear some argument in favour of what the public service has done for sport.

If the BBC were to get a second channel, they could cover more sports like sailing or golf.

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[37] BBC WAC: R4/46/2, note from Robert Hudson, November 15 1960.

[38] BBC WAC: R4/46/2, note from Robert Hudson to Rex Alston, November 15 1960. A short submission from the MCC was presented in December. Far from helping the BBC's case, it complained that the fees the BBC paid for sporting coverage on television were too low and that the range of sporting material offered to the BBC on Saturday afternoons needed to be 'controlled' as potential spectators were tempted to stay at home rather than come to the game. Cmnd. 1819, paper no. 168, memorandum from the Marylebone Cricket Club.

[39] BBC WAC: R4/46/4, note from Robert Hudson, December 5 1960.

> [Such sports'] prospects are not likely to get brighter under any other system but ours. I hope with these considerations in mind, you may feel that the Council should make its views known to the Committee.[40]

But when the reply came, two months later, it was a rare snub. Signed only by the Council's General Secretary, a Miss P.C. Colson, it allowed that various governing bodies had submitted advice to the Council, 'some asking for more attention for lesser-known sports'. The Council, however, did not have 'sufficient experience to justify it in making considered representations to the Pilkington Committee'.[41] Perhaps the BBC had earned the snub as the Council had already written to the Committee before receiving Greene's letter. It had called among other things for more amateur sport on television, but remained determinedly neutral as between the BBC and its competitor.[42]

The corporation had more success with rowing. John Arkell, who lived near Henley and was the BBC's new Director of Administration, was on first-name terms with Gully Nickalls, Chairman of the Amateur Rowing Association, an ex-champion oarsman who had commentated on the BBC's first-ever broadcast of the Boat Race in 1927. He was now Vice-Chairman of a Mayfair advertising agency, and thus prominent in an industry committed to extending advertising on television. Arkell entertained him to lunch at the Savile Club in January 1961, and, following Nickall's thank-you letter sent to Arkell's home, wrote to him from the BBC. He included copies of three of Greene's speeches. 'A second television service' wrote Arkell 'would enable the BBC to provide a planned choice'. It would enable it to offer, in particular, extended coverage of rowing and the Henley Regatta. And were there to be local BBC radio stations, they would broadcast items on local regattas 'and other interesting programmes on rowing'.

> Remembering all that rowing is, and the point ... about Henley being something more than purely a rowing regatta, which system, [commercial or the BBC], is likely in the long run to benefit the rowing fraternity, and through it, the nation as a whole?

Arkell added that he and John Snagge - a popular broadcaster and the current rowing commentator - would be happy to 'accept an invitation to come and see the sort of television hoops you negotiate for your clients'.[43]

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[40] BBC WAC: R4/46/4, letter from Sir Hugh Greene to Sir Stanley Rous, December 9 1960.
[41] BBC WAC: R4/46/10 Letter from Miss P.C. Colson to Sir Hugh Greene, February 9 1961.
[42] Cmnd. 1819, letter from the Central Council of Physical Recreation to the Committee on Broadcasting, November 1960, paper no. 166, para. 2.
[43] BBC WAC: R4/46/7, letter from John Arkell to Gully Nickalls, January 17 1961.

The following month, the Chairman of the Henley Regatta wrote to Arkell to say that the Amateur Rowing Association and the Henley Committee of Management had met, and agreed that their 'duty to rowing' meant they had to support the BBC.

> I am glad to say that the Amateur Rowing Association have now submitted a memorandum to the Pilkington Committee ... we will hope that you get your extra channel, and that then you will be in a position to consider again live television of Henley, and of additional rowing events.[44]

Arkell seems to have particularly enjoyed playing his part in the public relations offensive. Earlier, in his private capacity as a member of the executive of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, he had persuaded the executive to allow him to draft a submission from them to the Committee. With a wholly specious air of objectivity his draft emphasised the importance of placing the means of educating and interesting the public in the Council's concerns 'in the hands of a body which takes a highly responsible view of the power which it has'. But it regretted that the Council had neither the resources nor the opportunity 'to analyse the relative output of the BBC and commercial television services'. The point was, as he explained in a note to Grisewood which accompanied the draft, that it had been thought better 'not to come down in favour of the BBC...preference for the BBC could be allowed to be read between the lines'.[45] Grisewood noted on his copy of the draft that he thought it was 'admirable'. Arkell was encouraged to submit it.

But, however subtle it may have been, the executive of the CPRE turned it down. 'On the sociological aspect', their Assistant Secretary wrote to Arkell, they were probably all 'one hundred per cent on your side'. But what was needed was 'something shorter and more general and less angled (however obliquely) in favour of the BBC'.[46] Their submission turned out to consist of two paragraphs calling for care to be taken over the siting of transmission masts, and one for more programmes teaching the public to appreciate the countryside.[47]

Arkell seems not at all to have been downhearted by this rejection. Others he took to lunch at the Savile around this time included the Secretaries of the National Playing Fields Association, and the National Council of YMCAs. Both were reluctant to commit their large federal organizations publicly to a pro-BBC viewpoint. He sent them practically identical letters suggesting they use a

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[44] BBC WAC: R4/46/10, letter from Harold Rickett, Chairman of the Amateur Rowing Association, to John Arkell., February 16.
[45] BBC WAC: R4/46/2, note from John Arkell to Harman Grisewood, with draft of letter to the CPRE.
[46] BBC WAC: R4/46/4, letter from the Assistant Secretary CPRE to John Arkell, December 5, 1960.
[47] Cmnd. 1819, paper no. 254, memorandum from the The Council for the Preservation of Rural England.

paragraph which he'd included in the draft rejected by the CPRE.[48] He also suggested another identically-worded paragraph for possible inclusion in their evidence:

> There are obviously different views as to whether the introduction of commercial television was a right or wrong move several years ago. But even those who felt it was a right move then may well feel now that any further development should be on public service lines.

With the YMCAs he went further. To their Secretary, he added:

> Unless bodies like the YMCA are prepared to give evidence, there is a danger that the Committee may get a one-sided view ... I think it would be a mistake if, say, further development of both television and sound broadcasting on commercial lines were advocated by the Pilkington Committee without their being fully informed of the sort of views which a body like the YMCA would be expected to hold.

Both organizations turned him down. Neither gave evidence.[49] But if there were some failures, there were many successes. The section of the British establishment which despised commercialism and the market was asserting its dominance over salesmen and seekers-after-profit. If, as the CPRE assured Arkell, some élite opinion always was 'one hundred per cent' on the BBC's side, the BBC still needed to ensure its position at the centre of the alliance of the great and the good, reducing to invisibility the possibility that any government could legislate against it. If the interests of 'the rowing fraternity' could be identified with those of the nation as a whole, so could those of the BBC. The momentum was becoming unstoppable.

But, again, whenever an opportunity occurred, the BBC moved to strengthen its position, as with the Association of Municipal Corporations. Reference was made in the last chapter to the submission from this body, which Pilkington treated with particular respect.[50] But there is evidence that it was only drawn up after consultation with the BBC. In November 1960, Frank Gillard, who was the Controller West Region, had spotted that the Association was to hold its annual meeting in London on dates in December. Calculating that its evidence might be helpful, he wrote to Grisewood suggesting that these meetings might form a good opportunity to 'get at'

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[48] That paragraph read, in part: 'There may on occasions be divergences of opinions and interests among constituent bodies of the Council (Association), and no such organization can be regarded as individually committed to the views in this statement. Nevertheless the statement is generally representative of common aims and founded on considered opinion'. In the two new letters, he added: ' I do not know whether this suggestion is of any help'. BBC WAC: R4/46/5, letters to Vice-Admiral H.G. Norman, Secretary of the National Playing Fields Association and N.S. Tucker of the National Council of YMCAs, both December 15 1960.

[49] It was certainly fortunate for the BBC's public relations that both organizations did not accept Arkell's suggested wording, publish their evidence, and thus raise speculations about its common authorship.

[50] See page 92 above.

the Association. He thought that 'one method might be to invite the members to a television show and give them a drink afterwards'.[51]

There is no record that such an invitation was offered or accepted. The file shows, however, that the two organizations had certainly been talking to each other, and the Association saw its duty as being to support the BBC. Its submission, made in April 1961, was certainly favourable to the Corporation. Its criticism of television, which has already been noted, did not distinguish between the BBC and ITV. But the context made it clear which of the two broadcasting institutions it preferred. Local radio, it declared, 'should be in the hands of the BBC'. Were it in run by commercial organizations, it felt that there would be 'a degree of susceptibility' to 'political and business influence', which the BBC could reliably be expected to resist.[52] On television, however, its preference seemed less certain. If another channel was available, it suggested only that 'it should be placed at the disposal of the BBC, or used by BBC and ITA services jointly in some way'. However, it *was* certain that commercial television 'neither requires or justifies any extension', whereas the service provided by the BBC 'more than justifies the financial contributions made'. The licence fee was 'just and fair'. The Association did, however, also call for 'some form of compulsory co-operation between the BBC and the ITA to eliminate waste or duplication in programmes for schools'.[53]

The BBC was clearly disappointed. In a note to Greene in May, after the Association had published its evidence, Grisewood explained, regretfully, that, although he had discussed its submission earlier with Sir Harold Banwell, the Association's General Secretary, the Association has chosen not to show it to him in advance. It was, however, still 'likely to prove one of the more important items of evidence sent to the Committee', and Sir Harold had done his best to excuse himself.

> He [had] deliberately not consulted us about the drafting of this evidence because he felt that he might be asked in oral evidence ... whether he had done so, and he wanted to be able to say 'No'. I said that we were of course pleased with what was said about sound broadcasting, but in regard to television, we were sorry to see a reference to compulsory co-operation. Banwell explained that this was aimed at the ITA and the Companies and not us ... It is a pity that [he] kept away from us during the drafting stage, with the effect that on television matters his evidence is not as satisfactory as it might have been.[54]

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[51] BBC WAC: R4/46/2, note from Frank Gillard to Harman Grisewood, November 21 1960. Presumably this would be a non-alcoholic drink.
[52] Cmnd. 1819-1, Para. 8.
[53] Cmnd. 1819 -1, Paras. 16 & 20.
[54] BBC WAC: R4/46/14, letter from Harman Grisewood to Hugh Greene, May 10 1961.

Greene wrote to Banwell some days later. The BBC was delighted, he said, with the Association's support on sound issues. But a rebuke was due. Any kind of joint television service 'would not be feasible'. The two systems were too dissimilar for co-operation to be possible. The BBC, on its own, could offer 'a real alternative' with a second channel. The use of the phrase 'compulsory co-operation' was 'rather unfortunate from our point of view'. But, he added:

> I should not like you to think that we are other then very appreciative of the contents of your memorandum. We welcome the trend of its recommendations most warmly and consider it one of the most important pieces of evidence so far submitted to the Committee.[55]

Nearly two weeks later, Banwell replied. His tone was apologetic.

> Perhaps the word 'jointly' does not give the exact meaning we had in mind. Our memorandum does come down heavily in your favour ... I hope the phrase 'compulsory co-operation' will not be misunderstood.

The Association had only wanted to avoid duplication in broadcasting to schools. But perhaps the possible misunderstanding could yet be rectified.

> If the Association is invited to give oral evidence, I may be glad of the opportunity of having a word with you or Grisewood beforehand.[56]

In the event, the Association was not invited to give oral evidence.

One further instance of the BBC making a direct unseen contribution to the deliberations of the Committee should be mentioned, although it refers to radio rather than television. Frank Gillard had managed to build up a good relationship with John Shields, who, it will be remembered, lived and worked as a headmaster in Winchester, which was within Gillard's region. In February 1961, Gillard reported to Grisewood that a visit to the Bristol studios which he'd arranged for Shields the previous November had been a success. It had turned Shields into 'an enthusiast for local broadcasting'. He'd arranged another visit for Shields, this time to Southampton. But in the interim:

> [Shields] had become increasingly distressed to find opinion on the Committee hardening against [local broadcasting] in any form. In his view this attitude was about to gel, and his fellow members were likely very soon to pass beyond the point at which their lack of interest could be shaken.

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[55] BBC WAC: R4/46/14, letter from Hugh Greene to Sir Harold Banwell, May 15 1961.
[56] BBC WAC: R4/46/15, letter from Sir Harold Banwell to Hugh Greene, May 26 1961.

Shields had prepared a paper for the Committee outlining his ideas of what a local radio station could do. Gillard told Grisewood that, over dinner, he'd gone through it with Shields, and made it a much more realistic and professional document; it no longer included, for example, a proposal that local stations should close down completely in August. There remained the problem that Shields was still 'leaning towards funding the stations by advertising revenue on a non-profit basis'. Gillard reported that he persuaded Shields that 'the Director-General's case' that, if advertising worked locally, it would 'almost inevitably' lead to a commercial takeover nationally, which would be 'disastrous'. In the end, of course, it was the Committee's unanimous recommendation that local radio should be provided by the BBC, without advertising.[57]

(iv): **Victory**

The BBC's written submission to Pilkington (excluding fourteen memoranda from various advisory bodies) extended to twenty-seven different papers. The incomplete version of it published in the volumes of evidence, which did not include some supporting materials, took up 317 pages. It was submitted over a period extending from August 1960, before the full Committee had actually met, to April 1962.[58]

A paper on television programme policy submitted in February 1961, making the case for a second BBC channel, was evidently calculated to appeal to the Committee. It was based on intensive discussions which had been held by Kenneth Adam, the Director of Television, with all his heads of departments, but also it was written after careful consideration of the Committee's predilections. By now they were likely to be well understood at the BBC.

> A second service would enable the BBC to increase the number of serious, cultural, and informational programmes, to cater more fully for regional needs and aspirations, to extend educational broadcasts, to experiment on the screen ... and to serve more interests ... The aim over all of central planning would be to provide a diversity of programmes on either channel, and

[57] BBC WAC: R4/46/10, note from Frank Gillard to Harman Grisewood, February 7 1961. After reporting to Grisewood on the support proposals for local commercial radio were getting from newspaper groups and other businesses in his area - and sending copies to Grisewood of unpublished submissions to Pilkington that he had somehow obtained - he was asked by Grisewood to find out as much as he could 'about how things develop and what the people concerned are doing'. Any reports he may have made have not survived. See correspondence in R4/46/7 and R4/46/8. It may also be noted here that the Advertising Inquiry Council, which described itself as 'an independent body set up to minimise the negative and harmful effects of advertising' was in frequent touch with the BBC, who helped it prepare its evidence for Pilkington. BBC WAC: R4/46/16, note of meeting with Francis Noel-Baker MP and others, June 21 1961.

[58] Cmnd 1819, papers 13-49 inc.

> so to construct the sequence on each so that viewers who did not switch would find themselves exposed at some time of the evening to instructional material.[59]

By contrast, the ITA, in a paper already submitted the previous November, when it could still feel confident of its case, argued for a different kind of diversity. It referred to the 'master principle that in a free society control of the means of communication should be diversified, not centralised'.

> The variety needed is not to be found in the simultaneous offer of different programmes by the same producer, but in an offer of the same classes of programmes by different producers: the kind of variety provided only by the existence of as many different organizations as possible

(although it felt there were good reasons for the ITA continuing to regulate all commercial channels, including any new ones). There was variety at present; three channels from three separate sources would provide more; and after all, it reasoned,

> if, for some technical reason, it had in the past been possible to have only two newspapers, or two theatres, or two cinemas, or two magazines, the Authority does not think it would occur to anyone ... that a third ... should be placed in the direct operational hands of those already conducting one of them.[60]

The BBC did not bother with a rebuttal until February 1962, by when, as we know, the Committee had made up its mind. Two commercial services competing with each other would produce in this country 'a comparable situation' to that which can be seen in the United States: 'monotony and a limited range of programmes'.

> The dominance in television which would then be established by commercial broadcasting would seriously weaken the standing of the BBC...not only in this country, but overseas where British broadcasting has long served as an example to be followed.[61]

That dominance could only be achieved, of course, if both services regularly transmitted programmes which large audiences freely choose to watch in preference to whatever was being offered by the BBC. In fact, BBC1 was to compete ferociously - and with some success - in mass appeal programming. But that was not the image it wished to put forward to the Pilkington Committee. Instead, the corporation emphasized its missionary role when Greene came to give oral evidence in March 1961. It was to do with the 'character' of the BBC.

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[59] Cmnd. 1819, paper no. 29, BBC memorandum no. 13, paras. 4 & 9.
[60] Cmnd. 1819, paper no. 81, ITA memorandum 'The Future of Television', paras. 10-12.
[61] Cmnd. 1819, paper no. 43, BBC memorandum no. 31, 'The ITA's Proposals for the Future of Television' para. 3.

> The BBC being a form of public service, and a very important form of public service, can attract the best people in the way that it is not perhaps too far-fetched to say in other days the Indian Civil Service tended to attract some of the best elements of this country. I think the BBC has the same sort of character; the feeling that you are doing a job in the interests of the public, and at the same time, not being too pompous but doing a job which is a great deal of fun ... I think it is a very important part of the responsibility of the BBC to lead in encouraging public appreciation of literature, the arts, and what have you, in a way which goes beyond certainly the interests of the majority audience, but which might in time become the interests of a majority audience.[62]

Greene and Pilkington were speaking the same language. By September that year, Greene could prepare a report for the BBC's General Advisory Council which expressed its satisfaction that criticism of television in the evidence to the Committee had 'been directed mainly against ITV programmes'.

> The Committee has shown itself to be deeply concerned about the social aspects of television. Its questioning of the BBC on the various aspects of this matter has been friendly and understanding, though criticisms of particular programmes and aspects of planning have been expressed.

(When the Report was published, it contained two specific admissions made by the BBC in response to criticism, one, that 'they had once made a mistake in showing two crime series on Saturday evenings', and, two, that 'they had made a mistake in putting on a number of plays by young dramatists on successive Sunday nights'. These had been 'kitchen-sink' plays, which had been 'sordid and sleazy'. These errors in programme planning would not be repeated, though the BBC would continue to encourage 'significant' developments in British dramatic writing.[63])

Greene's report to his Council concluded:

> The corporation thinks that its case is being sympathetically considered...while the Committee's questions have been penetrating, they have never been hostile ... [the Committee] appear to have assumed that the BBC is competently run and that its internal administration and methods of financial control are sound.[64]

We may here anticipate the Report's publication to note that the congratulations reaching Greene on news of the Report the following year included a letter from Sir William Haley at *The Times,* who had had an advance copy of it. It read: 'My dear Carleton-Greene. What a splendid vindication for the BBC. My warmest congratulations'. Frank Gillard sent a telegram from Bristol. 'West Region offers delighted congratulations on this notable triumph and for the brilliant exposition of the BBC's case which has brought it about'. Greene replied immediately. 'Many

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[62] TNA HO: 244/37, transcript of oral evidence from Sir Hugh Greene, March 29, 1961.
[63] Cmnd. 1753, paras. 120 & 123.
[64] BBC WAC: R4/38/15, Report from the D-G to the General Advisory Council, September 25 1961.

thanks to you and West Region ... if the exposition of our case was as brilliant as you say no-one contributed more than the Controller West Region aided by so many of his staff".[65] No evidence has survived of the contributions that Gillard and his staff made beyond those listed above. It must, however, be highly probable that Gillard's excellent relationship with John Shields was a channel though which the good news for the BBC about the Committee's deliberations could reach Greene long before publication.

Other letters of congratulations included one from a former Acting Director-General, Sir Basil Nicolls. In reply, Greene wrote:

> It was rather astonishing to find that the Report had endorsed every single recommendation we made ... the only thing which really worries me at the moment is finance - but I hope we can get that settled satisfactorily.[66]

The BBC estimated in evidence in August 1960 that it would need the full proceeds of the combined licence fee for radio and television of £4 a year to operate a second service on VHF wavebands in Band III, similar to the transmission system used by the current single BBC service.[67] In December 1960 in fresh evidence it estimated that a new television service on higher-quality UHF transmitters in Bands IV and V, along with the development of colour and local sound radio, would need a licence fee of 'about' £5.[68] In October 1961, it revised its needs upwards. The combined licence fee would have to be £6 from 1964.[69]

Pilkington's response was positive. Six pounds a year was four (old) pence a day. 'We do not think it would be too much to pay'.[70] But would the government agree?

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[65] BBC WAC: R4/51/1, letter from Sir William Haley June 26 1961, telegrammes between Gillard and Greene, June 27 1961. Gillard was a distinguished former war correspondent. In August 1963 he was to be appointed Director of Sound Broadcasting.
[66] BBC WAC: R4/51/2, letter from Greene to Nicolls, July 10 1962.
[67] Cmnd. 1819, paper no. 13, BBC memorandum no.1, 'Summary of Development 1952-1960', para. 110.
[68] Cmnd. 1819, paper no. 21, BBC memorandum no. 6, 'BBC Finances: Ten Year Forecast', para.1. The move to UHF wavebands using 625 lines was to be wholly non-controversial and speedily accepted. See Chapter 6 below.
[69] Cmnd 1819, paper no. 22, BBC memorandum no.30, 'Ten-Year Forecast: Supplementary Note', para.9.
[70] Cmnd. 1753, para. 501.

Chapter Five: **'The Bombshell'**

(i): **Introduction**

This chapter is in two main sections. It sets out to draw together the assumptions and beliefs that underwrote the Report's most radical proposal, and then looks at the initial response to the Report by press and politicians.

Richard Hoggart insisted in his 1963 review of the Report's reception that it was because the press and those he called 'publicists' failed to understand the seriousness of the Report's arguments that it was so heavily criticised.

> The greatest disappointment in the reception of the Pilkington Report was not that so many publicists disagreed with it, but that they approached its themes so shoddily prepared. Here was a confrontation of an unusually searching kind, and few were ready for it. This has depressing implications, and they go far wider than broadcasting matters alone.[1]

The critics refused to admit, according to Hoggart, that 'this was an argument about freedom and responsibility in a democracy'. However, were not critics' claims about peoples' right to watch what they wanted on television no less an argument about democracy? It will be argued here that the main thrust of the Report did indeed represent a serious challenge to the conventional understanding of how 'freedom' should be interpreted for the mass media. Moreover there was agreement between the Report and its critics that television needed still to be kept under control for the public good. But there was evident anxiety among politicians and journalists about the implications of the *kind* of control the Report demanded. This anxiety was perhaps better founded than the authors and supporters of the Report would allow.

[1] Hoggart, 'The difficulties of democratic debate', pp.195/196.

(ii): 'The Purposes of Broadcasting'

It has been demonstrated earlier that Chapter III of the Report, on 'The Purposes of Broadcasting', was very much the work of Dennis Lawrence. He remained intensely proud of it. In 1980, retired from the Civil Service, he was able to claim at a conference of academics and broadcasters that it continued to be widely endorsed, and that even the Conservative Government of its time had come to accept that it 'represented [their] expectations of the aims to which the ITA's performance would be directed'.[2] But, in 1962, it was clear that it was this chapter, more than any other, which challenged the basic values of contemporary capitalist society.

It is, by any standards, an extraordinary document to be found in an official publication, and it deserves to be treated at some length, as must some other contentious parts of the Report.

It begins with the then unexceptionable statement that 'as the frequency space available to broadcasting is limited, it is essential that what is available should be used to the best advantage'.[3] 'Good' broadcasting could not be 'precisely' defined, but it could definitely be recognised; 'standards exist', and the scarcity of frequencies 'emphasises the need for all those services to be good'.[4] In sound broadcasting (in respect of which the Committee considered only BBC programmes, though it recognised the existence of Radio Luxembourg without discussing its appeal), there was 'no significant failure to realise the purposes of broadcasting'.[5]

But 'for television, the story was different'. Submissions reaching the Committee 'showed much disquiet and dissatisfaction...there was something lacking in the programmes as such: a lack of programme items of this or that kind, or a more general lack of quality'.[6] Concern about 'quality' merged indistinguishably into concern about morality; the two were forcibly linked. The linkage

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[2] Dennis Lawrence in *The Future of Broadcasting*, eds. R. Hoggart and J. Morgan (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 69.
[3] Cmnd. 1753, para. 33.
[4] Ibid, paras. 34/35.
[5] Ibid, para. 37. It should be perhaps pointed out that the revolution in pop music was by now several years old, and the huge demand from young people for their own kind of music well-established. It was barely recognised by BBC Radio; instead, many young people chose to listen to Radio Luxemburg, despite its often inadequate reception.
[6] Ibid, paras. 38/39. For a discussion of the submissions received by the Committee, see Chapter Three above. For a discussion of the' moral panic' about television, see Chapter Two.

'derived from the view that the power of the medium to influence and persuade [was] immense', and even if there was little evidence to prove it,

> our own judgement, after weighing such evidence as is available to us, leads us to a clear conclusion. It is that, unless and until there is unmistakable proof to the contrary, the presumption must be that television is and will be a main factor in influencing the values and moral standards of our society ... The measure of the broadcasting authorities' responsibility is this: that by its nature, broadcasting must be in a constant and sensitive relationship with the moral condition of society. Broadcasters are, and must be, involved; this gives them a responsibility they cannot evade.[7]

But, in current practice,

> programme items were far too often devised with the object of seeking, at whatever cost in quality or variety, the largest possible audience; and that, to obtain this object, the items nearly always appealed to a low level of public taste ... not all the items which attracted large audiences were poor. But in far too many the effect was to produce a passively acquiescent or even an indifferent audience rather than an actively interested one. [8]

These items might be said to be 'what the public wants'. But 'the public' was composed of individuals, and no two were alike; 'each is composed of a different pattern of tastes, abilities and possibilities'.

> If viewers - "the public" - are thought of as "the mass audience", or "the majority", they will be offered only the average of common experience and awareness; the "ordinary"; the commonplace - for what all know and do is, by definition, commonplace. They will be kept unaware of what lies beyond the average of common experience and awareness; their field of choice will be limited. In time, they may to come to like only what they know. But it will always be true that, had they been offered a wider range from which to choose, they might and often would have chosen otherwise, and with greater enjoyment.[9]

The phrase 'giving the public what it wants' was not only misleading, but

> patronising and arrogant, in that it claims to know what the public is, but defines it as no more than the mass audience; and in that it claims to know what it wants, but limits its choice to the average of experience. In this sense we reject it utterly.[10]

The alternative was not for the broadcaster to 'give the public what he thinks is good for it'. That was equally patronising and arrogant - and was not advocated in any submissions the Committee had received. Instead, the broadcaster's duty was to:

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[7] Cmnd. 1753: para. 42. For the origins of these and other comments in the Report in material written for the Committee by Lawrence, see p. 89 above. For the disagreement on this point with Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick see pp. 102-103 above. In his 1963 article, Hoggart defended the Committee's decision not to commission any research on the effects of television viewing; there wasn't time for research into 'subjective areas'. And 'although social science can be invaluable...while it may give a great many useful 'is's', [it] cannot give a single 'ought". See Hoggart, 'The difficulties of democratic debate', p.189.

[8] Ibid, para. 43.

[9] Ibid, para. 46.

[10] Ibid, para. 48.

> respect the public's right to choose from the widest possible range of subject matter and so to enlarge worthwhile experience ... the broadcaster must explore [the possible range], and choose from it first. This might be called "giving a lead": but it is not the lead of the aristocratic or arrogant. It is the proper exercise of responsibility by public authorities duly constituted as trustees for the public interest.[11]

The chapter concludes with an insistence that television must not be regarded only as a mirror of society.

> For ... what is the mirror to reflect? Is to reflect the best or the worst in us? One cannot escape the question by saying that it must do both; one must ask then whether it is to present the best and the worst with complete indifference and without comment. And if the answer is that such passivity is unthinkable, that in showing the best and the worst television must show them for what they are, then an active choice has been made...That this choice must be made emphasises the main flaw in the comparison. Television does not, and cannot, merely reflect the moral standards of society. It must affect them, either by changing or by reinforcing them.[12]

Television, in other words, was too important to be ruled by the economics of the market-place.

If, as we shall see below, political correspondents were right in suggesting that Macmillan and his ministers were seriously interested in 'developing the theme of a party with a sense of responsibility ... for spiritual values', [13] they should perhaps have been quick to seize on this section of the Report. But their attention, like that of most others, was probably drawn to the less philosophical, and much more directly contentious, chapters V and VII, the former dealing with television in general, and the latter with ITV in particular, which along with chapter VIII on advertising, were those which provoked the most hostility.

Chapter V - 'Television: The Evidence and Representations' - began with a section on the causes for the disquiet about television to which earlier chapters had already referred. 'Very often', it insisted, the use by television of its unique power 'suggested a lack of awareness of, or concern about, the consequences' of its power. That concern 'cannot be dismissed as the unrepresentative opinion of a few well-meaning but over-anxious critics, still less that of cranks'. Many different bodies had given evidence, those quoted alongside the Association of Municipal Corporations (given priority as we have seen), were the National Federation of Women's' Institutes, and the 'Independent Group Of Conservatives' whose report detected 'growing signs which, it thought,

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[11] Ibid, para. 49.
[12] Ibid, para. 52. For Hoggart's notion of 'the mirror and the lamp', see p.103 above.
[13] See below, *n.*51, pp. 152/153.

producers would do well to heed, of public feeling on the subject of unsuitable programmes'.[14] From all the representations which had been put to them, the Committee concluded that the 'underlying cause of the disquiet about television' was:

> the belief, deeply felt, that the way television has portrayed human behaviour and moral issues has already done something and will in time do much to worsen the moral climate of the country.

There was much concern in the submissions which had been received about violence on television, especially in those programmes which could be watched by children, as well as about sexual behaviour. And, as we have seen, many objected to the amount of alcohol drunk on television. It was 'not in itself regrettable' that 'the [moral]standards by which people have hitherto lived' were often being questioned. But:

> If, in much of television, our society is presented as having extensively answered those questions by rejecting the standards by which it has hitherto lived and putting bad standards or none in their place ... then the questions will not have been fairly put but will have been hopelessly prejudiced - for ill.[15]

The section of this chapter which perhaps drew the most criticism was headlined 'Triviality'. With a blithe disregard for any indications of popular appeal that might be visible in the ratings charts, the Report drew up an uncompromising indictment.

> There was, we were told, a preoccupation in many programmes with the superficial, the cheaply sensational. Many mass appeal programmes were vapid and puerile, their content often derivative, repetitious and lacking in real substance. There was a vast amount of unworthy material, and to transmit it was to misuse intricate machinery and equipment, skill, ingenuity and time ... Either those who provided these programmes mistakenly assumed that popular taste was, uniformly and irremediably, low, and popular culture irresponsible, or worse, that they did not care about them.[16]

This was summed up in the charge of 'triviality'. The Committee was obviously eager to avoid the accusation that they believed that popular taste was 'low'. 'Triviality', they argued, was not related to the subject matter of a programme; 'one programme may be gay and frivolous - as light as a soufflé - and not be trivial' (how was left unexplained, but possibly the Committee had a Joyce Grenfell programme in mind). On the other hand, a programme which dealt with

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[14] Ibid, para. 81. For a discussion of the Edwards Committee, see pp.46-49 above. For a discussion of the BBC's involvement in the evidence submitted by the Association of Municipal Corporations, see pp. 129-131, above.

[15] Ibid, para. 90. Perhaps a conservative (with a small 'c') government eager to express its concern for moral and spiritual values might have wished to take up the point, as had done the Edwards Committee. But evidently Macmillan and others remained too conscious of the Toby Belch vote to ally themselves too openly or too fully with the moralists.

[16] Ibid, para. 97.

'intellectual or artistic affairs' could be 'trivial, in its grasp or treatment'. It might legitimately be felt that the definition of 'trivial' was being stretched to and beyond breaking point.

> A trivial approach can consist in a failure to respect the potentialities of the subject-matter, no matter what it be, or in a too-ready reliance on well-tried themes, or in a habit of conforming to established patterns, or in a reluctance to be imaginatively adventurous. A trivial presentation may consist in a failure to take full and disciplined advantage of the artistic and technical facilities which are relevant to a particular subject, or in an excessive interest in smart "packaging" at the expense of the contents of the package, or in a reliance on "gimmicks" so as to give a spurious interest to a programme at the cost of its imaginative integrity, or in too great a dependence on hackneyed devices for creating suspense or raising a laugh or evoking tears.[17]

But if the Report was above all anxious to counter the expected complaint that it was only interested in criticising popular programmes, it could not resist attacking some of the most popular programmes of all. These were the worst offenders which dominated peak-time on ITV, the 'quiz-shows and panel games ... which particularly lend themselves to triviality...with practically no subject matter or body of their own' [18]. The section concluded:

> Triviality is a natural vice of television and ...where it prevails it operates to lower general standards of enjoyment and understanding. It is, as were reminded, "more dangerous to the soul than wickedness".[19]

The Report had yet to draw any distinction between the performance of the BBC and ITV. In the following chapters it turned its attention to the two different services. First, in Chapter VI, to the BBC. They were 'not blameless'; they did not always succeed in eschewing triviality; but 'the BBC know good broadcasting and by and large, they are providing it'. The Report drew up tables giving the total in percentages of peak-viewing hours of 'serious' programmes transmitted by the two services over a three-year period. In doing so, it failed to take account of its own argument that programmes on 'serious' subjects could become 'trivial' through the way the subjects were treated.

'Serious' programmes were defined by content as being: 'news and current affairs, talks and discussions, documentary programmes, outside broadcasts of national importance and other major events of a non-sporting character, music (other than "light music"), opera, ballet and religious programmes'.[20] All drama - some of it serious, some not - was excluded. Perhaps the real

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[17] Ibid, para. 99.
[18] Ibid, para. 100.
[19] Ibid, para. 102. The quotation, unattributed here, is, as we have seen, from R.H. Tawney.
[20] Ibid, paras. 127/128 & 187/188. This definition of 'serious' programming was taken in full from one used by the BBC, as for example in a press release reporting a speech by Gerald Beadle, then Director of

difficulty of deciding what was 'serious' music (A Mozart *divertimento?* Gilbert and Sullivan - beloved by Sir Harry? Miles Davis playing *Porgy and Bess*?) should have led to music being excluded also. 'Peak-viewing hours' were defined as being between 7.00pm and 10.30pm. In the ITV column a second figure (in brackets), taken from Chapter VII on ITV, represents the proportion of 'serious' programmes, defined in the same way, (excluding schools programmes) transmitted in all hours.

	BBC	ITV	
January-June 1958	35	9	(17 ¼)
June-December 1958	33	12 ¾	(16 ¾)
January-June 1959	33 ½	11 ½	(17 ¾)
July-December 1959	33	15 ½	(18 ½)
January-June 1960	33 ½	9 ½	(16 ½)
June-December 1960	31	9 ¼	(19 ½)

The ITA had told the Committee that 'they were satisfied that the balance on independent television between the various classes of programme items was broadly right', pointing out that 'serious' programmes transmitted outside peak-time on ITV drew bigger audiences than similar programmes at peak-time on the BBC. That was, the ITA argued, because viewers could choose to watch minority-appeal programmes at times when they were not forced to choose between them and the mass-appeal programmes which they also wanted to watch. But various company spokesmen were quoted as giving evidence that the reality was that ITV simply wanted to maximise its audience at all times. Roy Thomson, in another gaffe (if that is what it was) made what the Report saw as the crucial admission that 'because advertisers paid for viewers, it [was] inevitable in the system that you should be reaching generally for a maximum'. [21]

The Committee was unmoved by the ITA's argument. In Chapter VII, it insisted that it was good to show 'serious' programmes. It was better to show them at peak-times. Minorities should be able to watch programmes they enjoyed when it was convenient for them to watch. The Committee condemned what it saw as the ITA's failure to strike the right balance, as revealed in the above figures, complaining that it underestimated 'the public's capacity for interest and enjoyment', accusing it of failing to recognise 'that we are all, as individuals, members sometimes of 'majority' and sometimes of 'minority' audiences'. And, finally, of not recognising that 'a person can watch

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Television, to the Schools Broadcasting Council in 1960. See BBC WAC: T16/326/2, press release dated November 11 1960.

[21] Ibid, para. 194.

different programmes with differing degrees of enjoyment and is often more enthusiastic about the tastes and interests he shares with minorities than those he shares with majorities'.[22] The verdict was clear:

> We conclude that the dissatisfaction with television can largely be ascribed to the independent television service. Its concept of balance does not satisfy the varied and many-sided tastes and interests of the public. In the field of entertainment - and not least in light entertainment - there is much that lacks quality. It is these facts which largely account for the widespread opinion that much on television is trivial.[23]

Earlier in Chapter VII, there had been a lengthy discussion of the philosophical differences that had emerged when Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick had declined to accept the Committee's insistence on the power of television to influence society. 'We were' said the Report 'disturbed by [Sir Ivone's] views'.[24] It returned to the point in its summing up of this chapter.

> The [ITV] service falls well short of what a good public service of broadcasting should be ... The role of the broadcasting organization, as the authority interpreted it to us, seemed to lack that positive and active quality which is essential to good broadcasting. We reject, too, its view that television will be shaped by society. A number of factors will operate to shape television ... but what must figure very largely are the attitudes, the convictions, the motives of those who provide programmes - who plan and produce what we see on our television screens. Their role is not passive; they in turn will be helping, however imperceptibly, to affect society.[25]

The 'disquiet' and 'dissatisfaction' about television discerned by the Committee in the British viewing public was, without qualification 'justly attributed to ITV'.

In Chapter VIII on advertising which followed, the Report went on to demonstrate the significance it saw in the gap between the Committee's view of advertising and that Sir Robert Fraser had offered for the ITA.[26] The Report repeated the criticism it had put to Fraser that:

> Too many advertisements played on impulses which were discreditable; for example, upon acquisitiveness, snobbery, fear, uncritical conformity, and "keeping up with the Joneses" [or] the abuse ... of fine impulses: for example, of love, manliness, maternal pride ... the persuasively-presented suggestions, for example, that if romance and love were to blossom, or if the home was to be happy, then it was essential to use this or that product.[27]

But Fraser, the Report regrets, saw the way of life portrayed by television advertisements 'as a pleasing one ... and expressed himself unable to follow the argument that the nature of some

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[22] Ibid, para. 190.
[23] Ibid, para. 201.
[24] Ibid, paras. 156-160, and also pp.102-103 above.
[25] Ibid, paras. 207-208.
[26] For Fraser's oral evidence, see pp. 100-101 above.
[27] Ibid, para. 244.

advertisements was socially or individually damaging'. It was horrified by Fraser's admission that the social and cultural critique of advertisements that was put to him had never been discussed by the Authority.[28] The Committee's sympathies were clearly with those with critical views, like the only two such groups mentioned in this section of its Report, the Workers' Educational Association and the National Union of Teachers. It summed up its own view:

> Advertisements too often imply that, unless one buys the equipment or the product advertised, one will have cause for shame, or loss of self-respect, or cannot hope for happiness; and that if one does buy these things, happiness, confidence, friends will accrue as a sort of free bonus.

But it is notable that the Report contained no attempt to illustrate or substantiate its case; it includes no description of, or any quotation from, any advertisements, let alone those that are said to carry the meanings specified. Instead, the Report says baldly:

> We are in no doubt that advertisements relying on the kind of appeal criticised are common; many examples of them have been cited to us, and they are there to be observed. [29]

In fact, not only do the sixteen-page written submission of the WEA and the nine-page written submission of the NUT contain no specific examples of objectionable advertising, but there is in them no mention of advertisements at all. In any case, the volumes of written evidence were only to be published in September, three months after the Report itself.[30] And then, to find any of these citations, it would be necessary to plough through two volumes, and 1,268 pages, of written evidence.[31] In my own reading of these two volumes, I have found none.

Nor does the Report consider the argument that commercials for 'this' and 'that' product cancel each other out. If Daz and Persil both try, using all the tricks of which the Report is so critical, to manipulate the consumer into believing that the product being advertised is necessary for health and happiness, romance and maternal pride, and the other is, therefore, not, isn't the consumer forced to make a choice? (S)he must clearly disbelieve one - why should (s)he believe the other? Or the similar claims being made by all the other products? The harder advertisers try, the more likely they are to drive the consumer to adopt a baffled scepticism. Throughout many generations, the shopper in the market-place has learnt that two adjacent traders could not both be selling the

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[28] Ibid, para. 246.
[29] Ibid, para. 252.
[30] For the WEA submission, see Cmnd. 1819-1, 1962, pp. 846-862, and for the NUT submission, ibid, pp. 830-839.
[31] The transcripts of oral evidence, extending to very many volumes, are now available in the National Archive. They have never been published.

best apples, however loud they shout. It is notable that this argument is rarely used by critics of advertising, who are as determined as its proponents to proclaim how persuasive it is.

Perhaps accusations of 'bias', 'spleen', and 'malice' were more likely to be made against the Report because of the absence of any evidence produced to support many of its arguments, and in particular this one. But, as the Committee saw it, ITA blindness on this point was one of its most egregious failures, contributing substantially to the need for its thoroughgoing reform and reconstitution.

(ii): 'Pilkington tells the Public to go to Hell'

On the morning of publication day there was a packed Press Conference at Post Office Headquarters, transmitted through closed circuit television to the offices of the BBC, the ITA, and several of the ITV contractors. Photographs show that all the Committee were present, with Lady Pilkington alongside her husband, but no-one from the Government. Only Sir Harry spoke, 'shyly' according to the *Daily Mail*.[32]

According to the *Guardian*, he was in determined mood. He wanted, he declared, to refute any notion that

> the committee was composed of highbrows or authoritarians out of touch with the common man. The philosophy of the report was democratic, against restriction ... Above all he insisted that it was a unanimous report, and he went further. "This unanimity has been freely arrived at, and contains no elements at all of horse trading for the sake of a common front".

Unanimity could be important. As we have seen, it had been Sir Harry's intention to achieve it from the beginning. Now there was a widespread feeling that the unanimity of the Report could make it harder for the Government to reject. The Guardian's reporter was impressed that a former president of the Federation of British Industries 'who seemed aware of the hostility the report would arouse among commercial interests' should not have sought to dilute its basic argument.

> "Overriding all other considerations", he insisted, "considerations of the welfare of the shareholders, or the welfare of advertisers, or even of cost, is the consideration that [broadcasting] is a public service and that the viewing and listening public are those for whom it is to be provided".

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[32] *The Daily Mail*, June 28, 1962.

As for the radical proposals for ITV,

> "It is no good tinkering with a machine which can only turn out the wrong product".[33]

It was those proposals which excited by far the most attention. The recommendation for the third channel to go to the BBC - and for a much reformed ITA to have its second channel only after five years - drew much less comment.

In the evening, a dinner to celebrate publication was held for the Committee at the Savoy Grill. It turned out to be an uncomfortable occasion. Dennis Lawrence has said that Bevins, the Minister to whom the Report was addressed, made a 'somewhat unpleasant' speech.[34] Many years later, Betty Whitley was still angry that Bevins that evening ignored Sir Harry's by-now evident state of exhaustion and ill-health - she believed him to be still suffering from the amoebic dysentery for which he'd been hospitalised in 1961, while the Committee was sitting [35] - and seemed throughout to 'jeer' at him.[36] According to Lawrence, his senior officials had 'pushed' Bevins into setting up the dinner, arguing that 'he owed it to the Committee'. But in his speech, Bevins, according to Lawrence, made it clear that he was 'more than somewhat disgruntled' by the Report, which he had seen only three weeks earlier, having failed to persuade Lawrence to breach the confidentiality of the Committee so as to keep him informed of its progress.[37] Bevins was also, doubtless, able to foresee that the political difficulties which lay ahead threatened his career.

According to Betty Whitley, Sir Harry insisted in his speech, despite the reservations he had expressed privately to Lawrence earlier in the year, that all the members of the Committee were determined to defend each one of the Committee's recommendations. But when Sir Harry ventured to quote a familiar hymn:

> We will fight, not to heed the wounds
> Labour, and not to seek repose,
> Strive, and not to seek reward ...

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[33] *The Guardian*, June 28, 1962.
[34] Personal interview with Lawrence, July 2, 2001.
[35] Francis Newark took the chair in Sir Harry's absence.
[36] Personal interview with Elizabeth Whitley, May 22, 2001.
[37] Lawrence says that Bevins had tried, as was common practice, to get him to divulge an early account of the Committee's findings while it was still sitting. Lawrence had refused, and had gone for support to Sir Ronald German, Director-General of the Post Office, who had decreed that, as long as the Committee was sitting, its Secretary was responsible only to its Chairman, and should maintain confidentiality. On the day after publication, in Lawrence's words, Bevins was to become 'his master' again. Personal interview, July 2, 2001.

'he stumbled and got stuck in the middle and [she] had to prompt him'.

Sir Harry's normally restrained diary, whose entry for that day has already been quoted, records that the Press Conference was 'successful and much of it re-broadcast afterwards. Regarded as a bombshell!', but that the dinner with Bevins that evening was 'rather disheartening'. [38] On the following day, however, he was to write: 'Uproar over our report. Papers received it badly, and with much distortion, with few exceptions'. [39] It was the kind of reaction he had foreseen, and feared, in his private letter to Lawrence in February.

The *Daily Mirror's* contemptuous dismissal of the Committee as Sir Harry's 'fifteenth, or sixteenth, or seventeenth Eleven' has already been quoted. On publication-day it devoted four of its twenty-four pages to the Report, including the whole of its front page. With photographs of a rather tired-looking bespectacled Sir Harry at the press conference, and one of his bike parked outside Pilkington's Mayfair office, the main headline was in underlined thick black type:

'TV: PILKINGTON TELLS THE PUBLIC TO GO TO HELL'[40]

The page one story was combined with page one comment.

> **Sir Harry Pilkington's notions on the future of television and radio are now public property. They were issued yesterday, June 27. They should have been issued three months ago - on April 1, All Fools' Day.**
> **Get ready for the laughs.**
> For Sir Harry, earnest and doleful as he appears to be, has amused his friends by bounding into first place among Britain's Top Ten comedians without a single rehearsal.
> Sir Harry's Committee of Eleven have astonished the Cabinet - who fortunately have the LAST WORD - with their exultant bias. They are not merely trying to turn the clock back: they want to go back to the hour-glass and the sundial.

Heavy black type was used again for the Mirror's version of what it saw as the Committee's main proposal:

> **You can't have the Television programmes which a two-thirds majority of you prefer. You must have a different set-up controlled by the Government. An "Uncle" ITA, responsible for planning and selecting programmes - just like the "Auntie" BBC.**
> ... The one and only democratic principle applied is - **EQUAL MISERY ALL ROUND.** The guiding maxim is - **IF IT'S POPULAR IT'S WRONG.** The same Committee, if they applied the same yardstick to an inquiry into the British Constitution, would banish the Royal Family because they, too, are popular.

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[38] Pilkington Diary, entry June 27, 1962.
[39] Ibid, June 28, 1962.
[40] *The Daily Mirror*, June 28, 1962.

As we have seen, the paper acknowledged that it was 'interested' in ATV. It quoted the ATV Chairman, Sir Robert Renwick, Bt., KBE (as he was styled by the Mirror):

> **The Pilkington Committee have tabled a biased report which has one apparent objective - to destroy in one vicious blow the whole structure which has given the public the programmes they enjoy - and its place to set up a second monolithic State institution.**
> ***It is unthinkable that any Conservative Government will contemplate for one moment an acceptance of this sorry document.'***
> **The Mirror believes that NO Government the British people are ever likely to elect would contemplate the acceptance of the whole report.**

It had no comment to make on the award of the third channel to the BBC. Nor had the *Daily Mail* - which disclosed that it too had interests in commercial television (though it did not detail them)[41] - which was almost equally critical. It also quoted Renwick's statement prominently, and three others from heads of ITV companies. Peter Cadbury of Westward Television, one of the smallest companies, based in Plymouth, had declared that the best place for the Report was 'in the wastepaper basket'. It showed 'the futility of asking unqualified people to decide questions of national importance'. He was planning to burn the Report - and Sir Harry - in effigy.[42] 'Not since Oliver Cromwell' opined Alfred Francis of TWW, based in Cardiff, 'has anyone been so cross about innocent public entertainment'. John Spencer Wills of Associated-Rediffusion, put in his own words what he believed the Committee were saying: 'If the Government's terms of reference permitted, our sentence upon ITV would be death. As it is, we have taken the next best step and recommended nationalisation'. In its own comment the Mail called the report 'fantastic'. With its proposals for ITV it was seeking to create 'a bureaucratic monster'.[43]

By contrast, the *New Statesman* on the following day thought the Report should rank alongside the Webbs' Royal Commission on the Poor Law and the Beveridge Report on social security.

> It epitomises a shift of public opinion against the acquisitive society ... commercial television has had a profound impact on British society, speeding up its conversion to the self-seeking materialism and the trivialised values of capitalist affluence. In the name of 'free competition', it imposes the morality of the give-away, the huckster ... the supporters of public taste must now stand firm and fight.[44]

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[41] Associated Newspapers, the *Mail*'s parent company, owned 38% of Southern Television, the medium-sized company based in Southampton. See Cmnd. 1753, para.623, and p.160 below.
[42] Sendall, *ITV in Britain,* vol. 2, p.138.
[43] *The Daily Mail*, June 28, 1962.
[44] *The New Statesman*, June 29, 1962.

A document circulating in the Cabinet Office provided a breakdown of the first press comments.[45] Those giving a 'favourable' general opinion were, predictably, the *London Evening Standard* and the *Daily Express* (both owned by Beaverbrook, and both traditionally anti-ITV [46]), and, equally predictably, the *Guardian*, despite its ownership of shares in Anglia Television. The *Guardian* editorial declared that the Committee had found that 'good broadcasting and the sale of advertising time do not mix'; the secondary objective of the ITV system - selling advertising - had been realised, the former, providing 'good' broadcasting, had not. It welcomed the award of the third channel to the BBC, which had said that it would use a second channel 'to provide a genuinely alternative programme, with greater opportunity for experiment', whereas a second ITV channel would regrettably have been 'on the same sort of lines as the first'.[47] The *Times* was said to be only 'faintly critical', but 'generally favourable'. In fact, its leader-writer wholly accepted the Report's contention that:

> where broadcasting and television are concerned, considerations in favour of plurality of control are heavily outweighed by those the committee have presented ... broadcasting is too potent an instrument of social conformation (sic) to be placed in the hands of any who have not the status, ethos, and undivided responsibilities of public trustees.

Those who detected the literary style of the paper's editor were probably right. Sir William Haley had been the Director-General of the BBC for eleven years, leaving in 1952 to edit the *Times*. The editorial did have some criticisms of the Report. More attention should have been paid to the argument, wrong but still 'alive and kicking', of the dangers in a plural society of leaving broadcasting as a monopoly, or near-monopoly. The 1951 Beveridge Report, which recommended that the BBC should be the nation's sole broadcaster, had countered that argument more effectively. But:

> The Conservatives, for a variety of motives, irresponsibly threw it out of the window. They are now presented with an independent view of their handiwork by a committee of their own choosing. The result should cause them some sense of shame. Will they dare to ignore this second, reiterated finding and behave as irresponsibly again?[48]

The Cabinet office note continued that, of other papers, the *Financial Times* was 'reserved – but generally favourable' to the Report, the *Daily Herald*, still part-owned by the TUC, was 'slightly

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[45] TNA: CAB 21/4966, undated Cabinet Office minute,
[46] The *Express* had at one stage been part of the group that later became ATV, but lost its place to the *Mirror* after the ITA under Kenneth Clark had ruled against the participation in a major contractor of a Conservative national newspaper. See Sendall, *ITV in Britain*, vol. 1, p.76-78. Thereafter, Beaverbrook newspapers were consistently critical of ITV.
[47] *The Guardian*, June 28, 1962.
[48] *The Times*, June 28, 1962.

critical', the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Sketch* and the *London Evening News* 'critical', the *Mirror*, as we have seen 'bitterly critical', and the *Daily Telegraph* 'highly critical'. There can be little doubt that for Sir Harry, in particular, and other conservatively-inclined members of the Committee, the response of most of the right-wing press was highly disappointing. Their certainty that they were being reasonable, and their unanimity, had counted for nothing.

In a view that many on the right were to come to share, the *Telegraph*, in tones that suggested its leader-writer took personally Pilkington's criticisms of ITV, saw the Report as an attack on the very basis and principles of capitalism.

> Throughout [it] runs the assumptions that commercial disciplines are inimical to, if not actually incompatible with, any sort of objective excellence; that nothing worthwhile can be achieved except by those free from all ignoble desire for gain; above all, that any enterprise deriving revenue from advertisements can only be debased and corrupted in consequence. A serious newspaper, itself deriving revenue from advertisements, can only be debased and corrupted in consequence. [49]

Political correspondents had been briefed by Government Ministers that, in the *Daily Mail*'s words, 'the Government is almost certain to reject the recommendation ... that the present ITV set-up should be torn down and replaced by an entirely new type of network'. The *Mail* had been told that Ministers believed that commercial television needed reform; it was admitted, its correspondent wrote, that there was 'big scope' for 'a stricter check' on programme quality, but a re-shaping of the network was not necessary. The overwhelming majority of more than a hundred and fifty Tory backbenchers attending a joint meeting of the broadcasting and science and technology committees agreed, according to Charles Bellairs. As he reported on it for Michael Fraser, the general feeling was that 'the strictures on ITV' were grossly exaggerated. Some members expressed the view that 'the first essential was to break the advertising monopoly' but rather more did want a second channel to go to the BBC, as long as there was no increase in the licence fee. 'The general public ... were unhappy about the commercial side of ITV, and especially about the very large profits being made'.[50]

Ministers had also been talking to The *Times*' political correspondent, who was able to report what he had discovered at some length. It was bad news for his Editor.

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[49] *The Daily Telegraph*, June 28, 1962.
[50] CPA: CRD 2/20/15, note by Charles Bellairs on Conservative Backbench Committee meeting, June 27, 1962.

> Several members of the Cabinet were bristling yesterday at the way in which they thought the Pilkington Committee...have brought the scales of their judgement bumping down in favour of the BBC and against commercial television.
> It was a reaction that reflected much party feeling. Some Conservative backbenchers were incensed by the Pilkington Report, published yesterday. Others were shocked. Many were at least mildly surprised. At least a few, to complete the record, were declaring themselves wholly in favour not only of the specific recommendations but of the principles and the arguments that underlay them.

The Government will at any rate 'hesitate before they surrender to the logic of the Report'.

> Some members of the Cabinet are undoubtedly as resentful about the tone of the Report as many backbenchers. They believe it to be loaded not only against commercial television but against the Conservative Administration that created it, and even against the capitalist principle. In the Cabinet, as in the Conservative Party at Westminster fairly generally, it is fair to say that the committee's practical recommendations were almost precisely what was expected ... But... the reasoning ... is widely thought to be exceptionable ... many who would not flinch from the actual recommendations, considered on their own, deeply resent the moral judgements not only of commercial television, but of the capitalist principle, in which they consider them to have been framed ... "bias" and "malice" are words that have been used ... some Conservatives who have been neutral about commercial television or indeed opposed to it from the beginning, are considered likely to be stung into a sharp reaction.[51]

That was also the view expressed privately in a note sent to the Director-General by the BBC's political correspondent, Hardiman Scott, who enjoyed a double role as broadcaster and as purveyor of political intelligence to the highest ranks of the BBC. The Report, he thought, had come 'to the right conclusions [about the BBC] but for the wrong reasons, and is an intolerant document'.

> Pro-BBC [Conservative] MPs have told me they are sure this view will spread on the backbenches. This means that the twenty-five or so Conservative MPs who are hostile to the BBC or have commercial interests, and perhaps another thirty or so who have no specific interests but are more favourable to independent television, could be joined by at least the same number who, although they may not quarrel with the recommendations, object to the 'moral authoritarianism' of the Report. They see this as striking not only at commercial interests, but at Conservative principles.[52]

As most newspapers were reporting, it was widely agreed that the recommendation for the third channel to go to the BBC would be accepted 'immediately', and that the proposals for reorganizing ITV would be rejected.

> But many feel that they can't leave things as they are [Scott's note continued]. I am told that Bevins has been instructed to get out some alternative plan for dealing with ITV, with the main aim of curbing the power and profits of the programme companies. It has also been suggested that

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[51] *The Times,* June 28, 1962. This press cutting was also circulated in the Cabinet Office. A copy is preserved in TNA: CAB 21/4966.
[52] BBC WAC: R4/51/1, note from Hardiman Scott to Sir Hugh Greene, June 28, 1962.

> a clause should be inserted in our Charter and the Television Act requiring the showing of a given number of serious programmes at peak-viewing hours ...
> I think it's worth bearing in mind the anxiety of the Conservative Party to present the image of responsible government. Since before the last party conference, the Prime Minister has been developing the theme of a party with a sense of responsibility not only for material values but for spiritual values. So, when all the fuss has died down, there will be strong pressures within the party for the Government to do the right and honourable thing.

And, by doing so, attract and retain the Malvolio vote. For the BBC, as we have seen, 'the right and honourable thing' would be to do whatever favoured the BBC. It, and allies such as Sir William Haley, saw its interests and the wider public interest as identical. The Government, however, was, for the time being, still waiting to see which way the wind blew. Bevins told Butler's Committee on broadcasting that alternative ways of meeting the main criticisms of ITV were being formulated. They involved 'creaming off the companies' profits' and giving more power to the Authority. In discussion, others pointed out that 'it was by no means clear that the course recommended in the Report would be satisfactory in practice.' The Authority might find it difficult to find staff to operate the dual roles of programming and of selling advertising. The companies, whose profits would be sharply reduced, might be unwilling to co-operate. 'ITV might lose its undoubtedly lively character'. Summing up, Butler declared that it would be 'very difficult' for the Government to express its views 'until public opinion had been given a full opportunity to express itself'.[53]

A note for the Prime Minister informed him that 'the Home Secretary's Committee have had a preliminary look at the Report and have provisionally concluded that the Government ought not to commit themselves on the structural proposals in advance of public reaction'[54]

That there was trouble ahead was clear to Ministers, who, as we have seen, had long feared that the party would be split on ideological lines between, broadly speaking, free marketeers and paternalists. But it was now possible that the paternalists' position had been seriously weakened by the way the Report made its case, and by its unfavourable reception, and that it would therefore be easier to reject the proposals for structural change than it might have been. Following a Cabinet meeting on June 8, Macmillan had written in his diary:

> Happily for us, the tone and temper of the report is deplorable. Such spleen and bias are shewn in every sentence, that the recommendations (which might be very troublesome) [emphasis in original] are weakened in force and persuasiveness. There will be a splendid political row over this

[53] TNA: CAB 134/1449, minutes of meeting June 4, 1962.
[54] TNA: CAB 21/4966, note to the PM from Michael Cary, June 6, 1962.

> – for, unlike economics, here is something which everyone can have an opinion – highbrow and low-brow, rich and poor.[55]

On July 4, about a hundred Tory backbenchers gathered to hear Sir Harry defend the Report. It was the day after publication of the interim White Paper, which Sir Harry described in his diary as 'ungracious and cowardly'. Of the meeting, he noted that it was 'tiring, but I believe I did it well'.[56] That was not Hardiman Scott's view. According to his confidential report,

> even [Sir Harry's] supporters conceded that he mishandled his contribution. Before the end many Members were fidgety and bored. It is said some were sleeping ... It is acknowledged that his appearance has done little, if anything, to swing the bulk of Conservative opinion (now critical of the Report) towards a more moderate position.[57]

Already, the kind of 'splendid political row' to which Macmillan referred was taking place in the Cabinet over the economic arguments for a permanent incomes policy, to which he in particular was strongly committed. After a Cabinet meeting on May 24, he wrote in his diary:

> Most of the time was taken up with the discussion of an 'incomes policy'. All the Ministers argued and all put forward different and conflicting views. At the end of it all, there was a complete impasse![58]

Macmillan himself had seen support for such interventionist measures as the mark of Conservatives who were 'paternalists and not afraid of a little *dirigisme*' as opposed to those who represented 'old Whig, liberal laissez-faire traditions'.[59] The split on broadcasting issues, initially manifesting itself in the battle over the original Television Act in 1953, replicated the unwelcome division between traditional paternalists and advocates of liberalism and *laissez-faire*.

Meanwhile, members of the Pilkington Committee were not altogether downhearted. In notes he made for a talk he was to give in the summer following publication, Elwyn Davies wrote that he had expected an angry reaction from newspapers with television interests. But he was generally optimistic.

> The reaction of the general public is more difficult to estimate ... so far as can be judged it seems to have accepted the main criticism of the report as being justified in essence ... the government may be surprised by the strength of opinion in favour of the report. Very often people hold one

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[55] The Diaries of Harold Macmillan, entry for June 8 1962. I am grateful to Peter Catterall for enabling me to see this material. If, despite the Report's various failings, it is agreed that it contains little or no 'spleen', it is possible to doubt whether Macmillan, or other Cabinet members, had actually read it.
[56] Pilkington Diary, entry July 4, 1962. For an account of the interim White Paper, see Chapter Six below.
[57] BBC WAC: R4/51/2, note from Hardiman Scott to DG, July 5, 1962.
[58] Harold Macmillan, *At the End of the Day: 1961-1963* (London: Macmillan, 1973) p.69.
[59] Ibid, p.37.

> view as 'men of the world', but another and different view as heads of families - and the latter is probably the decider.[60]

It was, perhaps, characteristic of the attitudes embedded in the Report that many of its members did not recognise that Britain was becoming a country where significant decisions were increasingly unlikely to be made by men as heads of families.

(iv): The Labour Party, Richard Hoggart, and 'The difficulties of democratic debate'.

Although only two of the Pilkington Committee's members - Richard Hoggart and Harold Collison - could possibly be identified as being on the left politically, it was on the left, where the *New Statesman*'s distrust of advertisers and advertising was typical, that many of the most vigorous defenders of Pilkington were to be found. But not everywhere.

Labour Party attitudes were reported to the BBC's DG by David Holmes, a member of Hardiman Scott's staff. He wrote:

> There is a strong impression about that Labour may not be going to employ all its courage in fighting the Pilkington battle. Never very far from their minds is the thought that the bulk of ITV viewers may also be the bulk of Labour voters.[61]

Scott himself reported on the meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party on July 11. Patrick Gordon Walker, the party's front-bench spokesman, was said to agree 'about the need for reorganizing ITV ... but the party should be careful about going the whole way with Pilkington'. The then backbencher Richard Marsh called Pilkington 'exaggerated, hysterical and completely one-sided ... the party really had to get away from its arrogant puritanism'.[62] Two days later, Scott was claiming to have been told by Hugh Gaitskell that he thought the party was 'about equally divided between those who accepted the whole of Pilkington and those who did not'. Herbert Bowden, however, the Chief Whip, (who was to become Chairman of the ITA in 1967) believed that the majority supported the whole of Pilkington 'with the exception, of course, of [the] proposal to increase the BBC licence fee'.[63]

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[60] National Museum of Wales: Elwyn and Margaret Davies papers, D5/5, undated notes for a talk.
[61] BBC WAC: R4/51/2, note from David Holmes, July 6, 1962.
[62] BBC WAC: R4/51/2, note from Hardiman Scott, July 11, 1962.
[63] BBC WAC: R4/51/3, note from Hardiman Scott, July 13, 1962.

Des Freedman has recently found the Labour Party guilty of being 'an inconsistent champion of democratic reform' in refusing to demand either the full implementation of Pilkington or the establishment of 'a new publicly owned and democratically structured network' to operate the third channel. But on the left of Labour - and to the left of that - support for the attack on ITV (though not for Pilkington's praise of the BBC) was practically unanimous. For example, *Tribune* lauded Pilkington for its 'brilliant diagnosis of the diseases of television', and a resolution passed at the TUC conference that autumn urged the Government to adopt Pilkington's recommendations 'which are designed to ensure that the most potent social, moral and cultural influences are used to bring enrichment and a high quality service to ordinary people rather than to further commercial interests'. [64] We have seen that the *Guardian* chose to foreground its own high-minded distaste for advertising in its support for Pilkington.

Although it can be shown that Hoggart's influence on the Committee was less crucial than many have believed, he became its most prominent spokesperson. He vigorously denied that the Committee had been 'political'. In a speech in July at Leicester University, for example, he defended all the positions Pilkington had taken. But, he said in answer to questions, Pilkington had had no political bias or agenda. Although, he admitted, 'his own Labour sympathies were well known ... he had no idea of how, for example, Joyce Grenfell, who had phoned him earlier that day, voted. And he had since discovered that the man who put up the plan for reorganizing the BBC was a Conservative'. Hoggart's references to Joyce Grenfell and Francis Newark ('the man who put up the plan') may be thought to be at best disingenuous.[65] But many - especially the critics of Pilkington - came to hold him responsible. Freedman quotes Hoggart's story of a lunch that summer with Richard Crossman, who had just left a shadow cabinet meeting which had endorsed an anti-Pilkington policy for fear of offending working-class Labour voters. Gaitskell had told Crossman to 'kick your [Hoggart's] arse'.[66]

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[64] Des Freedman, *Television Policies of the Labour Party 1951-2001* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 31-35.

[65] BBC WAC: R4/51/3 report dated July 25 of speech by Richard Hoggart at Vaughan College, Leicester on July 17. Earlier in the speech itself, he was reported saying as follows: 'Some people suspect I was the nigger in the woodpile in the proposal for reorganisation. This proposal arrived after 18 months: we were all sitting in Sir Harry's sitting room one day. I was not going to say anything; I was the next youngest member of the Committee. One member, a very senior member who certainly does not share my views on almost anything else, said: 'There is only one way to clear this up', and then he put forward the basic idea. We went round and round it for a long time, and considered it from every angle'. Clearly, Hoggart had understood for some time that Newark did not vote Labour. Newark's Conservative views were known, for example, among the staff of the BBC in Northern Ireland. See p. 81, above.

[66] Letter from Hoggart to Freedman, quoted in Freedman, *Television Policies of the Labour Party*, p.33.

That summer, the editor of *The New York Times Magazine* commissioned an article from him. 'Would he discuss', he recalled, 'whether educational television programmes can ever hope to command as large an audience as 'Gunsmoke'?'[67]

> The answer, of course, is "No". They can't, and it would be a queer society in which they could; or in which gardening programmes or book programmes or hobby programmes or current affairs programmes or ballet programmes - no matter how good they were - attracted anything like the audiences that a variety show gets.

Hoggart was not, of course, at fault in failing to foresee that 'variety programmes' would in time disappear completely from television screens - along with Westerns like 'Gunsmoke' - and that, broadly-speaking, 'hobby programmes' would come to dominate much peak-hour programming. But although, he insisted, the antithesis between 'giving the people what they want' and 'giving them what someone thinks is good for them' was false, he was quite sure that *he* knew what people wanted. To answer the Editor's question, he offered what he called 'a kind of allegory'. Suppose, he wrote, that twenty men (there is no mention of women) live in the same street, or block, and that they are all at home most evenings. At any one time in the evening any one of them can be found 'putting their feet up' or 'simply relaxing'.[68] But they spend half their free time doing other different things like working in the garden, 'doing elaborate carpentry in the basement', or reading books - 'one can, of course, vary such a list enormously' - so that, at any one moment, ten are involved in such activities, even if at the most only two are doing any one of them. In audience measurement terms, 'putting your feet up' would have a rating of fifty, and gardening, for example, a rating of ten. But if anyone suggested that 'putting your feet up' must be five times preferred to the other activities, 'the men on the street would think he was a fool'.

> If [it was said] that it is clear from the ratings that superabundant facilities for "Putting your feet up" are what almost everyone *really* wants almost all of the time - so that in future apartment planning no other facilities would be provided - then the twenty men would be likely to run him off the block.[69]

And so it is with the television audience. Hoggart, somehow, *knew* the audience didn't want peak-time to be occupied only by programmes of mass appeal. Like each of the twenty men, the audience can, equally, be said to be 'pleasantly amused and half-asleep' when watching mass-appeal programmes, but 'alive and interested' when watching minority-appeal programmes. Thus it is 'democratic', a term regularly used by Hoggart, to ensure that minority-appeal programmes

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[67] Richard Hoggart: 'Not so popular as 'Gunsmoke', but - ', *The New York Times Magazine*, November 4, 1962.

[68] For Geoffrey Gorer's distinctly pejorative use of the term 'relaxing', see p.26, above.

[69] The *New York Times* editor may have failed to point out to the author that few apartment-dwellers have gardens or basements.

are available to them at peak-time, even if a particular topic - and the list of topics can of course be 'enormous' - may appeal to a small minority of viewers, and a majority will always switch them off.

This argument, for which no evidence is given beyond the 'allegory', is equally present in the long article from 1963, which has already been quoted, on 'The Difficulties of Democratic Debate'. The article also originated as an address to a New York audience, this one as a lecture at Columbia University. In essence, it is a response to the criticism of the Report in the British press. As we have seen, it argues that the 'shoddiness' of the criticism of the Report made that debate extremely difficult, and, in fact, practically impossible. We are now able to judge whether the critics or Hoggart had the better of the argument, and also to examine some of the wider concerns which Hoggart raised.

He began by declaring that the Report the Committee eventually produced was 'as surprising to the Committee members as it was to many other people'. It was 'the wide-ranging evidence of public dissatisfaction', reinforced by their own enquiries, which led them 'gradually' but 'firmly and unanimously' to conclude that 'the experiment' of commercial television in Britain 'had proved substantially a failure'. [70] There is no hint of the pro-BBC bias, which as Chapter Two above showed, affected the heavily middle-class Committee. Nor is there any account of Hoggart's own criticisms of popular entertainment and of advertising, which, as we have seen, had been vigorously and widely expressed, nor any mention of the steer given to the Committee by its Secretary in the papers he drafted for it. Less contentiously, Hoggart goes on to say that neither he nor others on the Committee expected the reaction to the Report to be 'so sharp'. That was, perhaps, because the expectation was that it would be affected by the familiar anti-ITV consensus among élite groups in general, as were the Committee's members in particular. But:

> Opposition to a report of this kind was to be expected. Some people would lose the opportunity to make a lot of money, even more than they had already made, if its recommendations were expected ...When the Report was published the response was immediate and very violent. The members of the Committee were described as authoritarians, socialistic, round-heads, do-gooders, highbrows, puritans, and paternalists; they were, it was said, polemical, smug and naïve.[71]

Passages such as those from the *Daily Mirror* quoted earlier in this chapter are used to show how 'violent' was the reaction of the popular press. One paper, says Hoggart, without naming it, 'shouted that Big Brother television was around the corner; 'If they think you're enjoying yourself

[70] Hoggart, 'The difficulties of democratic debate' p. 183.
[71] Ibid, pp.185-186.

too much, they'll soon put a stop to that', it added'.[72] Later, he admits that the Committee members had all seen unfairness in the British press before.

> But this was an exceptional demonstration of distortion, tendentiousness, personal abuse, half-truth, straight misrepresentation, disingenuousness, pseudo-honesty and irresponsibility.[73]

The claim is made that 'hardly one [popular paper] bothered to give even a minimally comprehensive or balanced account of the Report's findings'.[74] It was a finding that may well have since been quoted in many undergraduate essays; it is likely to have given considerable impetus to the academic distrust of mass-appeal journalism that has continued to dominate much work in media studies. It was, however, not true.

Few of Hoggart's listeners in New York, or, later, his readers in Britain, will have scoured copies of English newspapers from June 28, 1962, to determine whether or not Hoggart's claim was justified. The reality was that, away from its front page story and comment, the *Daily Mirror* devoted the whole of its pages fourteen and fifteen to provide an exegesis of the Report - some thirteen hundred words. It was, by most professional standards, an admirably accurate and succinct précis of a 150,000 word document. Though there were omissions, it was capable of giving the reader an adequate grasp of the main points. It is included here, in full, in Appendix F, partly as a useful summary of the Report. Of the two other most popular national daily newspapers, the *Express* also produced a summary extending to nearly 2,000 words. That was, as we know, an anti-ITV paper, which wholeheartedly welcomed the Report. But Appendix F also includes the whole of the version published on page eleven of the anti-Pilkington *Daily Mail* at also nearly 2,000 words. That, it will be seen, was equally professional, providing a slightly different but also thorough and useful selection of the Report's main arguments and conclusions. Neither newspaper, admittedly, explains the Report's innovative definition of 'triviality'. That, perhaps, was a failing. Also it can be argued, correctly, that it was the front page treatment of the story in the *Mail* and the *Mirror* that would have had the most impact, and left the most definite impression on their readers' minds. Nonetheless, as a matter of fact, Hoggart's claim, above, was simply wrong. Both these two accounts of the Report can be seen to be considerably more than 'minimally' comprehensive, as well as fairly well-balanced. An accusation of unfairness and distortion could, it seems, equally well be levelled at Hoggart's article as at the popular press.

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[72] I have altered this quotation. As printed by Hoggart, it reads 'If you think you're enjoying yourself too much...' The sense clearly calls for it to be in the form it is above.
[73] Hoggart, 'The difficulties of democratic debate', p.188.
[74] Ibid, p.186.

Hoggart is quick to point out that those newspapers with substantial investments in ITV - 'most of them', he writes - could hardly be expected to react favourably to the Report's criticism of ITV. But as he himself agrees, the correlation is not exact. The *Guardian*, he says, dealt 'fairly (and favourably)' with the Report, despite its shares in Anglia Television, whereas the *Telegraph* and the *Times* had none. In fact, as the Report itself had shown, it was easy to exaggerate the degree of press ownership of ITV companies.[75] Three of the 'Big Four' had no press involvement in their shareholding at all. The *Daily Mirror*'s holding in ATV, along with that of its sister paper the *Sunday Pictorial*, amounted to 26% of voting and 16% of non-voting shares, similar to the *Guardian*'s 21% of each in Anglia. Thomson Television owned 80% of Scottish Television's voting shares, and Thomson Newspapers, publishers of the *Sunday Times*, held 100% of non-voting shares. Associated Newspapers, publishers of the *Daily Mail* and the *London Evening News*, held 38% of Southern Television. The *News of the World* owned 21% of TWW's voting shares and 12% of non-voting shares. In its detailed final recommendations, the Report singled out just Scottish Television for special attention, declaring that it should only retain its franchise 'if press interest [in the company] were reduced' [76].

Altogether Pilkington calculated that no more than 2.8% of voting shares and 9% of non-voting shares in the 'Big Four' companies were held by newspaper interests. Of the total shareholdings in the nine regional companies, newspaper interests (mostly locally based, with the exceptions mentioned above) owned 28% of voting shares and 29% of non-voting shares. But, as Hoggart himself pointed out, 'the Provincial Press was more in favour of the Report and ... dealt more responsibly with it than the nationals'.[77]

The reason Hoggart gives for many journalists reacting 'so sharply' to the Report was that they thought that they themselves were under attack.

> With few exceptions popular journalists accept the social system or are not given to serious questioning of it. It treats them well, or they are built that way, or they think they can 'play' it and retain an out-of-office-hours inviolability. So they fight back very hard if the system is challenged at the roots.[78]

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[75] Cmnd. 1753, para. 623.
[76] Ibid, para. 632.
[77] Hoggart, 'The difficulties of democratic debate', p.187.
[78] Ibid, p.188.

And, as they will have quickly realised, the criticisms directed at advertising-funded television could equally well be applied to advertising-funded newspapers. Arthur Christiansen, the highly-regarded ex-Editor of the Daily Express, is quoted as having asked the question: 'Is the free press in danger? After the Pilkington Report, anything can happen'. He at least, says Hoggart, 'saw the Report's relevance for newspapers.' [79]

But if it was 'relevant' for newspapers, was Christiansen's concern for 'the free press' in any way legitimate? For if it was, then the widespread opposition, right or wrong, to Pilkington was a reasonable and justified contribution to the debate.

Since the early 1960s complaints about the 'undemocratic' nature of the media have produced no blueprints for reform which have been workable and which have not involved an unacceptable level of state control. In 1991, James Curran and Jean Seaton detailed many of the accusations made in recent decades against the British press, citing an ever-increasing concentration of ownership in the hands of multi-national conglomerates. They, it was argued, were using their control of the media to support their own financial interests. The case was, and remains, strong. Curran and Seaton listed some of the ideas for reform, ranging from tough anti-monopoly legislation to restricting ownership, to a 'National Print Corporation' or 'Media Enterprise Board' which would subsidise selected 'under-resourced' publishers. [80] Tony Benn, for example, suggested that the *Times* 'should be established as a public corporation on the model of the BBC' [81]. Michael Meacher MP, who sat in the Labour Cabinet from 1997 to 2003, had proposed

> an Independent Press Authority, modelled on the Independent Broadcasting Authority [successor to the ITA], which would franchise existing newspapers and require them to adhere to an ethical code of conduct and maintain 'a reasonable balance' in the presentation of news and opinion. These franchises would be subject to periodical review, and could be revoked.

Another Labour MP, Chris Mullin, who was to hold various junior ministerial jobs in Labour Governments, proposed 'a more radical version' still.

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[79] Hoggart, 'The difficulties of democratic debate', p.189.
[80] Curran and Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility,* pp.348-353.
[81] It is interesting that Benn had been severely critical of the BBC - as being undemocratic - throughout the 1970s and 1980s. As the Minister responsible for broadcasting in Harold Wilson's Labour Government, he had considered permitting advertising on some BBC channels. Calling for more direct access to broadcasting by groups like trade unions, he had declared on more than one occasion, when in Opposition, that 'broadcasting is too important to be left to the broadcasters'. But if it was not to be left to the broadcasters, to whom should it be left?

> The Independent Press Authority would franchise profitable groups rather than individual newspapers. Preference in the allocation of franchises would be given to staff consortia, companies with staff representation, or companies without major commercial interests ... the Authority would be required to ensure pluralism of viewpoints in its allocation of franchises.[82]

And just as in Meacher's proposal, franchises could be withdrawn if the government-appointed Authority found their performance unsatisfactory. Or if the Authority changed its mind about the 'viewpoints' that should be allowed. It might, for example, think that a critical piece written about it did not represent 'a reasonable balance'.

If the disease was - and is - serious, the cure of control by the state or a state-appointed body would very likely be worse. And, unlike television stations which could remain prohibited from overtly expressing political opinions, under such a scheme newspaper publishers would be chosen *because* of their political opinions, and would remain in business only if the government and the authority found them acceptable. What was being proposed was the elimination of the incentive that led proprietors and editors of mass-market papers to fill their pages with what they *thought* would appeal to the largest possible audience - and which would reward them if it did. It was precisely the basis of the attack on the unreformed commercial television system several decades earlier. Such solutions as Meacher's and Mullin's were not widely encountered in discussions of print media in the early 1960s any more than they are today. But perhaps the newspapers and journalists who responded to Pilkington by fearing the operations of an Independent Press Authority were more clear-sighted about the possible implications of the Report than were Sir Harry and most of his Committee.

The angry reaction Pilkington received can be attributed - despite the evident and earnest sincerity with which it is denied in the Report, and by Hoggart since - to the fact that, for many who read generally balanced and fair accounts of it in their newspapers, the Report seemed to challenge *their* right to make *their* judgements in *their* way. The reaction among many journalists and in government must be understood in terms of their recognition that people who chose which newspapers to buy, and would choose for which political party to vote, believed that they had the right to choose for themselves, in Selwyn Lloyd's words, which television programmes they would watch in the evening.

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[82] Curran and Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility*, pp. 353-354.

Chapter Six: **Decisions on the BBC and ITV**

(i): **Introduction**

'No responsible government can wholly wash its hands of anything touching our standards of taste and behaviour ... It is not mere Puritanism to assert that the state of public morals and the standards of taste in public entertainment can never be a matter of indifference to patriotic men and women, and are not necessarily adequately catered for by purely commercial considerations. We can surely all agree that since the Church won her first victories in the blood and sand of the Coliseum it has been impossible to assume a purely cynical attitude to the business of amusement.

'But surely we must also be on our guard against the opposite danger of paternalism. Prohibition and censorship can be, as we have often discovered in the Christian centuries, as demoralising as surfeit. And if commercial considerations are admittedly inadequate as a criterion of public interest, those who seek to equate the pursuit of profit with the worship of evil are often better friends to the Devil than the pornographer or the pimp. If we cannot pass by undismayed by the spectacle of violence, vulgarity and triviality in art, there is also, surely, great unwisdom in trying to shackle human nature to an unnatural ascetism. The truth, my Lords, is surely that in matters of this kind there is somewhere a balance to be struck'[1]

Lord Hailsham, Lord President of the Council, opening the debate in the House of Lords on the Government's White Paper, July 18, 1962.

[1] *House of Lords Debates,* July 18, 1962, column 609/610.

The Government's first public response to the Report was an interim White Paper, published on July 4. As we noted earlier, a Ministerial Committee had been considering the linked issues of the reorganization of ITV and BBC finance since February. Attracted initially by the notion that the profits of the former could help pay for the latter, it was unable to come to any conclusion on financial arrangements before the end of 1962. This chapter examines the processes by which the government eventually determined its own policy, and examines the nature of the successful alliance between those who wished to restrain what they saw as the excesses of ITV, and the Treasury, anxious to increase its revenue. It chronicles also the defeat of the ITV lobby, which was concerned above all to defeat any legislation which could damage ITV's profitability. In the end, the 1963 Television Act provided the mechanism by which a stronger ITA could take control of ITV, the tax take was increased, and the programme companies still remained profitable.

(ii): 'A Wish for Improvement'

In her speech replying to the Commons debate on the White Paper, some two weeks after the Lords, Mervyn Pike, the Assistant Postmaster-General, echoed Lord Hailsham's declaration quoted above, if in less exalted prose. She referred to the 'wide gap' which existed between:

> those who take the view that television is a sort of moral therapy to restore what they regard as a weak and degenerate public taste and those who see it solely as a means of light entertainment and escape from the realities of life.[2]

The Government, she said, rejected both approaches. But, if it was to be guided neither by Toby Belch's base appetites nor Malvolio's moralising, the balance the Government was striking made it evident that it preferred the latter. The interim White Paper, published just one week after Pilkington, claimed that Independent Television was 'in many ways very successful'. It had produced 'lively and certainly popular television'.[3] But the Government was also firmly declaring, in line with Pilkington's key concept, that 'there [was] a wish for improvement in the general standards of all television programmes, and that programmes should, in particular, include less violence and triviality'.[4] 'The first need' was for television to offer more programmes 'of a strictly educational nature'. It would authorise extra hours for these 'at once' as part of the general service.

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[2] *House of Commons Debates*, July 31 1962, column 539.
[3] *Broadcasting: Memorandum on the Report of the Committee on Broadcasting 1960,* Cmnd. 1770, (London: HMSO, 1962) p.11.
[4] Cmnd. 1770, p.6.

As, under present arrangements, these would be 'likely to fall outside...peak evening viewing hours', so extra services were needed.

> One directly effective way of giving the viewer a choice of different types of programme, including more programmes of an educational and informative nature, or drawn from regional sources, is to authorise the BBC to put out a second one. This the [Pilkington] Committee recommend and the Government proposes to authorise.[5]

There was no mention of a need for more choice of entertainment programmes. The BBC was instructed to begin transmission on its second channel in London in mid-1964, and in the rest of the country as soon as possible after that.[6] Colour television was to be introduced. As for the cost, there would be an increase in the BBC's borrowing powers. That was 'an appropriate means', declared the White Paper, 'of meeting a fairly short-term need for high capital expenditure over a limited period'.[7] No mention was made of the BBC's medium or long-term needs.

As for other services, the Government agreed that, within fifteen years, there would be a 'need' to authorise all of the *six* national programmes that were shortly to become possible with transmission on UHF frequencies. 'In the next few years...in addition to the two existing programmes' and the new BBC service 'there will be scope for a second ITA programme'. But not yet. Pilkington had recommended that the ITA's second service should be authorised within five years of it being reformed. But, the White Paper regretted, 'the practical difficulties' presented by proposals for such radical restructuring were not 'fully appreciated' by Pilkington.

> The Government wishes to be satisfied that any new structure would remedy the defects it was designed to overcome and would not throw up equally serious difficulties of its own, or deprive the system of those features for which it can fairly take credit.

It was considering its own proposals for the future of independent television, and they would be published 'later'.[8]

In the end, the BBC's financial problems were solved, at least in the short and medium-term, with its independence of both government and commercial interests maintained. Advertising magazines whose abolition was called for in the White Paper did - eventually - disappear. But no fewer than eighteen years were to pass before another Conservative Government authorised a

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[5] Cmnd. 1770, pp.5/6.
[6] The BBC had had doubts whether it could be ready before January 1965. In fact, it went on the air in London - despite a spectacular power failure - in April 1964. See Briggs, *History*, vol. 5, pp.402/406.
[7] Cmnd. 1770, p.8.
[8] Cmnd. 1770, p.11.

second ITA-run channel, and another two years before it went on the air. That was Channel Four, and not ITA2. Moreover, for its first decade, Channel Four was to operate on strongly Pilkingtonian principles, and gravely disappoint those who had been looking forward to the arrival of something similar to ITV1. Not least among those were the manufacturers of television sets who were confidently turning out receivers with buttons marked ITV2. But none of the buttons were ever to be used for the purpose for which they were intended. ITV2 was not to come into being until the 21st century, and then only as one of several hundred channels available on digital platforms. The debates in 1962 and 1963 that surrounded and followed the publication of the Pilkington Report, and the decisions the Government found itself taking on the BBC and on the form of the 1963 Television Act, were to lay down a paternalist pattern for British television, with fewer channels than would have been permitted by the available technology, which lasted for nearly four decades.

(iii) 'Issues of great political and public importance'

One of the central problems facing the Government throughout 1962 and 1963 was how to follow one Pilkington recommendation - to give the BBC a second channel - and to reject another: that it should be paid for through an increase in the licence fee. Strident calls from some Conservative backbenchers for more 'competitive' television were largely ignored by the Government, along with more measured recommendations for new advertising-funded channels.[9]

One document, prepared for Bevins in the Post Office in December 1961, laid out a list of possible recommendations which it was thought the Postmaster-General could and would support. They had much in common with those Pilkington was to recommend. They included 'one additional programme for the BBC, and one for the ITA', 'a higher licence fee and market rentals to the ITA with surplus revenue to the Exchequer' (so as to produce revenue *and* reduce the politically damaging level of ITV profits), a rejection of subscription television, 'insistence on better standards of programme', and 'modification of advertising rules (to prohibit unnatural breaks)'.[10] Bevins, as we shall see, turned out to be among the critics of advertising. But the 'higher licence fee' contemplated by civil servants was anathema to politicians. The notion,

[9] For example, the scheme produced by the Roberts/Chelmer Committee. See p. 49, above.
[10] TNA: HO 256/814, note for PMG December 16, 1961.

however, that 'surplus revenue' from ITV might be used, directly or indirectly, to fund the BBC was one that many in the Government were reluctant to dismiss.

The main areas where controversy was expected in the debates to come were listed in some prescient notes on what future legislation might contain prepared for a Cabinet Home Affairs Committee meeting in January.

> (1) Powers and obligations of ITA regarding programme contractors (to have more power both in regard to programmes and advertisements, control of networking to limit powers of big companies. Also general question of balance and quality of programmes.)
> (2) Control of advertisements (specific and more precise control, amount and incidence of advertisements, prohibitions).
> (3) Future programme contracts, present profits.
>
> Note: It may be that points (1) and (3) will lead to changes in the structure of ITA advanced during Television Bill debates, e.g. that ITA should receive advertising revenue direct and the programme contractors become agents for producing programmes only. Even Pilkington may suggest this. [11]

An appendix to this document concerned the problem of worsening BBC finances, and the threat of a politically dangerous increase in the licence fee. It reported that the BBC was estimating a deficit of four million pounds by the end of March 1964, so that 'even with no developments such as a second programme ... the Government will need to consider additional finance for the BBC'. The BBC had said in October 1961 that it would need £6 a year by 1964 to clear its deficit and to pay for extra services. The Post Office thought it would need £5 a year. But it did point out that if the BBC were to receive more or less immediately the full £4 currently being charged, including the £1 excise duty, 'this would put off temporarily the need for an increase'. The only other possibility was a direct and immediate government grant.

The Home Affairs Committee reiterated its distinctly paternalist concern about television standards at a subsequent meeting in January 1962. It agreed that, despite practical difficulties, 'it was important - both internationally and socially - that the standards of television programmes would be carefully watched'.[12] Butler proposed a Ministerial Committee on the future of broadcasting and television. Bevins had told him that he expected to have reliable information on the Pilkington recommendations in February, and the Committee could then discuss them and

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[11] TNA: HO256/814, notes for Home Affairs Committee meeting January 19, 1962. For the 1959 Christopher Mayhew pamphlet in which the proposal was made, see p. 54 above.
[12] TNA: HO 256/814, minutes of HAC meeting, January 26, 1962.

prepare the necessary legislation. The issues, he thought, were 'of great political and public importance'.[13]

The Committee's first meeting was at the end of February. Butler took the chair.[14] Although, as we have seen, Lawrence had revealed nothing of that committee's deliberations to Bevins, Sir Harry had been less scrupulous. Bevins announced that Sir Harry had given him, in strict confidence, indications 'about the recommendations...the Committee would make'. Ministers should be careful not to break that confidence. But in fact Sir Harry had given little away. All that Bevins could go on to reveal was that the Committee would declare itself in favour of retaining the PMG as the Minister responsible for broadcasting, and would support the introduction of colour television 'when practicable' on UHF wavebands. Bevins declared that he was sure that Sir Harry would keep him informed on the more controversial questions.[15] In fact, nothing more was to emerge until the Report was delivered to Bevins in May.[16]

Meanwhile, the Butler Committee tackled the problem of BBC finance at a meeting in April. It agreed that the threat of an increase in the licence fee could be deferred 'for several years' if the Treasury allowed the BBC to receive the whole of the current fee, although it understood that there would be reluctance to relinquish such a lucrative and easily-collected tax. As a temporary alternative, which could postpone the increase until the far side of a General Election, perhaps Pilkington would recommend an increase in the BBC's borrowing powers, and the Government could take that up.[17] Echoing widespread Conservative distrust of the BBC, the Ministerial

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[13] TNA: CAB 21/4809, note from R.A. Butler to PM, February 1962.

[14] Other members included three ministers who were to lose their jobs in Macmillan's July purge: they were Lord Kilmuir, the Lord Chancellor, John Maclay, the Scottish Secretary, and Charles Hill, the Housing Minister. Sir Edward Boyle, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, was promoted out of his job. All four departing ministers were replaced on the Committee by their successors, who thus had little time to master this part of their briefs before legislation had to be formulated. Butler himself lost the Home Office, taking on 'a less prominent role' as First Secretary of State. See Ramsden, 1996, pp. 164/167. Apart from him, Ministers who remained on the Committee until its final meeting in November were Ian Macleod, Leader of the House, Peter Thorneycroft, the Minister of Aviation, and Bevins.

[15] TNA: CAB 134/1449, minutes of Committee on Broadcasting and Television, February 28, 1962.

[16] One indication that several Ministers had little sympathy for ITV came in a contribution from Sir David Eccles, Minister of Education, who attended the Committee's second session to discuss educational issues. He pointed out that those ITV companies who had declared themselves in favour of a separate educational channel were doing so, not because of their commitment to education, but principally to reduce the risk of excessive competition to their operations 'by having a possible fourth channel devoted solely to educational programmes'. Eccles was also to lose his job in the July purge. TNA: CAB 134/1449, minutes of CBT meeting, April 17, 1962. Sir Harry's reluctance to keep Bevins informed on the Committee's more contentious discussions doubtless contributed to the bad feeling between the two. See page 147 above.

[17] It did, endorsing the BBC's own suggestion, and the BBC's detailed figures in full, but as an adjunct to increasing the licence fee, not a substitute. See Cmnd. 1753, p. 151.

Committee decided anyway that the Government should 'as a matter of broad principle seek to avoid over-frequent changes in the licence fee and should, at the same time, avoid putting excessive sums within the control of the BBC'.[18] The BBC itself had long maintained (apart from its flirtation with the idea of subscription) that it was crucial to its independence that it should continue to be financed almost exclusively by the licence fee. But perhaps, Ministers thought, the money could come from those 'excessive' profits ITV was making. A paper for the Butler Committee produced in May jointly by the Post Office and the Treasury and signed by Bevins and Sir Edward Boyle, the Financial Secretary, argued that:

> in commercial television there is clearly big money which could and should be creamed off to the Exchequer; public opinion will not tolerate a continuance of the present financial arrangements after the present contracts expire.[19]

Various options, the paper explained, were open. There could be a levy on profits; or (anticipating Pilkington) the ITA could obtain the profits direct 'by selling advertising time itself (perhaps on a second programme only) and buying programmes from contractors'. Or - the proposal that was eventually adopted - the rental could be composed of two elements, one fixed to cover ITA costs (as it was at present) and one variable, to get a share of profitability, perhaps on a sliding scale'. But, slipping into the first person singular, the paper continued:

> The simplest and I think most practicable system may be the existing one, so changed that contracts are let to the highest bidder who could give a satisfactory service, excess revenue over ITA needs being siphoned off to the Exchequer.

That was only to come into being with the 1990 Television Act. Bevins said he was sure that there would be general support for 'ensuring that the public purse benefited to a greater extent than it did at present from commercial television'. And he added at the Committee meeting, in a thought not in the original paper, that there would also be support for ensuring that some part of the Exchequer's revenue from this source went to pay for the BBC [20]

The Committee formally recorded its agreement, specifically for 'some or all' of the additional revenue raised from ITV being 'made available to the BBC'. For many in the Government outside the Treasury, the financial issues affecting the BBC and ITV were closely linked; solving one set of problems would help solve the other.

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[18] TNA: CAB 134/1449, minutes of meeting, April 17, 1962.
[19] TNA: CAB 134/1449, CBT (62) 8, May 7, 1962.
[20] TNA: CAB 134/1449, minutes of meeting May 11, 1962.

The Treasury had looked at the possibilities for alternatives to the licence fee only to dismiss them in the evidence it submitted to Pilkington in April 1961. There were only two. The first was that 'the Corporation should be financed through general taxation - i.e. grant-in-aid - in place of income through licence revenue, or supplementing licence revenue'. But it argued that if the Corporation were getting its money from general taxation,

> [it] would be in a position very similar to that of a Government department, and would have to become subject to much the same kind of detailed control. Its expenditure would be accountable to, and subject to examination in detail by, the Comptroller and Auditor-General...Parliament would regard the Minister responsible...as being in some degree at any rate accountable for the Corporation's policies and actions. [21]

It added another, more philosophical, point. Broadcasting 'which includes various forms of entertainment' should, 'so far as possible', be paid for by those who use it. It was different from the health or education services, and did not justify a general subsidy from taxpayers who chose not to use it.

The second possible source was income from advertising or subscription. On that, the Treasury did not have a view.

Any notion the BBC had of operating a subscription service had been more or less abandoned by the time Pilkington reported, but, arguably, the BBC's willingness to give any consideration to this source of funding had weakened its overall case for reliance on the licence fee. It was left to Pilkington, as an outside body, to make a cogent and persuasive defence of the case, and, because of the direction in which Ministerial policy was moving, this was perhaps the most important service it performed for the BBC, and generally for the cause of public service broadcasting.

In a striking passage it cut to the heart of the matter, insisting that, although there were a number of feasible and effective methods of paying for broadcasting, 'it is not a matter of indifference which is adopted: for the method of paying for broadcasting affects the character of the service of broadcasting'.

> Thus, paying for broadcasting out of advertising revenue ... entails in some measure an obligation to the advertiser and so commits the broadcaster to an objective besides that of providing the best possible service of broadcasting, and one not wholly compatible with this aim ...The obligation on the BBC to provide a public service...is to make available to everybody, and as freely as possible, the widest range of programme material. Finance from subscription would operate against this ... Payment by grant out of general taxation would, by introducing direct financial control by the

[21] Cmnd. 1819, H.M. Treasury memorandum, pp.2/3.

> Government, strike at the independence of the broadcasting authority. Only the licence fee system implies no commitment to any objective other than the provision of the best possible service of broadcasting.[22]

The Report was distributed to Ministerial Committee members in May, and discussed both in the Committee and in the Cabinet. We have already mentioned Macmillan's account of its reception by the latter.[23] Official Cabinet minutes recognised that its criticism of the quality of independent television and of its current structure would be 'highly controversial' and 'a source of political embarrassment to the Government'. As previously noted, Butler's view was that 'it would be prudent to refrain from giving any indication of the Government's attitude [on these points] until public opinion had crystallised'. There would, however, have to be an interim White Paper in July.[24] The financial implications of the Report were not discussed in the Cabinet, nor by the Ministerial Committee until they met on June 27, the day after publication. Perhaps the passage from Pilkington quoted above had confirmed the Treasury in its view. In any case, Edward Boyle now declared that the Committee should overturn its earlier decision and accept the BBC's - and Pilkington's - argument on BBC finance, and the interim White Paper should say so. There was evidence, he thought, that the public would 'acquiesce in an increase in the licence fee'. Others at the meeting disagreed strongly. They knew, or suspected they knew, that increasing the licence fee would be profoundly unpopular, especially when it was widely believed that extra television channels could become available without the public having to pay for them. Government revenue from purchase tax on the sale of new television sets was increasing, and new taxes on ITV profits would also bring in more money. Unless that was used, at least in part, to fund the BBC, it would be impossible to go ahead with either a second BBC channel or colour television. But it was also agreed that 'it would be undesirable, given the existing economic climate, to give the appearance of Exchequer subsidy for television'. The Committee, caught between what it saw as two evils, remained irresolute. It agreed that it would wait for the Treasury to determine its policy, and take it to the Cabinet.[25]

The Cabinet met the following day. Henry Brooke, as Chief Secretary, spoke for the Treasury, which, as he made clear, remained committed to the principle that the BBC's growth should be

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[22] Cmnd. 1753, pp. 143/144.
[23] See p. 152 above.
[24] TNA: CC(62)40, Cabinet minutes, meeting June 7, 1962.
[25] TNA: CAB 134/1449, minutes of meeting June 27, 1962.

funded only by increases in the licence fee. But 'if it were not thought right to accept the Pilkington recommendation as a whole' the White Paper should say nothing about it. [26]

The Cabinet agreed. They would give the matter further consideration. On the day of their meeting, a Downing St. official, foreseeing the Cabinet's irresolution, had suggested to the Prime Minister that, in that case, 'something should be added' to the White Paper 'about the Government having regard to the cost to the BBC of any new services and its significance in terms of the future level of the licence fee'.[27] But in the end, as we have seen, the Government gratefully accepted the BBC's own suggestion about increasing borrowing powers, as endorsed by Pilkington, and the White Paper included only that.

Bevins had still not given up. A week later, he was telling lobby correspondents, as privately reported to the Director-General by the BBC's Hardiman Scott:

> Some of the money received in income tax, profits tax, advertising levy and purchase tax on television sets might conceivably be hived off to avoid an increase in the licence ... really, you know, you couldn't ask pensioners to pay £6 for a licence.[28]

An increase in the licence fee was not to be contemplated, not, at any rate, in public, this side of a general election.

(iv): **The BBC returns to the fray**

Replying to Sir William Haley's letter of congratulation on the publication of the Report, Hugh Greene wrote: 'Now we must get [it]implemented'.[29] Another public relations campaign swung into action. In an internal note circulated before the end of June, Harman Grisewood wrote:

> The main aim of our public relations and publicity effort should now be to focus attention on the Report, and to liberate the reaction to it of the ordinary citizen and of those bodies who exist to serve or protect his interest. The Report is in danger of drowning in a sea of propaganda ... there is no reason why it should not be cherished by Conservatives - except reasons of which they should be ashamed.[30]

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[26] TNA: CC (62)43, minutes of meeting June 28, 1962.
[27] TNA: CAB 21/ 4966, note from Michael Cary to the PM, June 27, 1962.
[28] BBC WAC: R4/51/2, note from Hardiman Scott to the DG, July 5, 1962.
[29] BBC WAC: R4/51/1, letter from Sir Hugh Greene to Sir William Haley, June 27, 1962.
[30] BBC WAC: R4/51/1, memo from H. Grisewood, June 29, 1962.

And which were left unspecified. Perhaps the reference was to certain Conservatives' populist instincts, and to others' base commercialism. Grisewood and Greene were clear that, just as before, the BBC should be willing to dissimulate in the public interest. Grisewood reported to his colleagues that Greene 'would like to consider means of stimulating letters ... to the press' from bodies and individuals sympathetic to the BBC, who might not write unprompted, and who would not need not to acknowledge their contact with the Corporation. Other correspondence listed individuals and groups who could be persuaded to help, from familiar organizations like the Association of Municipal Corporations to writers like Marghanita Laski and Compton Mackenzie, old friends of the BBC, and, it was left unsaid, frequent recipients of BBC fees. The Corporation should not yet speak out for itself in public. Grisewood wrote that 'to raise our voice now on the financial issue would prejudice Ministers against us'. One official warned that 'any kind of standard letter would be most unadvisable'. Lance Thirkell, Head of the Secretariat, added that he was 'worried about the possible boomerang effect of any general letter...and the appearance in correspondence of standard phrases and formulae'. He and others in the Secretariat 'still hanker[ed] slightly after a meeting, and lobbying on the "old boy net"'. A note was sent to John Arkell reminding him in particular 'of the possible dangers if it [became] known that the Corporation has sent identical standard letters to a large number of organizations ... persuasion to be vocal [on the BBC's behalf] should ideally be by personal contact'.[31]

Thirkell made some handwritten notes after a departmental meeting early in July.

> Points to be made:
> Need for complementary as opposed to competitive choice in Television
> Need for more money for BBC
> Independent Television is not free television
> Those who shout the loudest against the report are those with the largest financial interest in commercial radio and television
> The BBC (Conservatives only) is a Conservative creation
>
> People to make them to:
> Press
> Members of Parliament
> Bodies which gave evidence
> Influential friends.[32]

Clearly, there was some confidence that Conservatives could be persuaded to support the BBC. Grisewood wrote to Frank Gillard, still in Bristol, in the belief that he was in touch with Sir Peter

[31] BBC WAC: R4/51/2, notes from Grisewood, Colin Shaw, Lance Thirkell, various dates June/ July 1962.
[32] BBC WAC: R4/51/2, undated note by Lance Thirkell, July 1962.

Rawlinson, then the Chairman of the backbench Conservative Parliamentary Committee on broadcasting.

> Rawlinson I fancy is broadly favourable to the general trend of the Report. If that is so, then he might have some more suggestions about how we might help to show Conservatives that support for the Report is wholly compatible with modern Conservative ideas - certainly support for the BBC part of it.

No reply from Gillard is to be found in the archives. The plan to gain support mainly through personal contact and 'the old boy net' seems to have been carried out, insofar as the files contain few documents forming part of the campaign, in marked contrast to what had happened two years previously. One surviving document is a letter from Grisewood, dated July 3, 1962, written to Grace Wyndham Goldie, the BBC's revered Head of Television Talks and Current Affairs, which describes a visit to the BBC studios by a certain Lord Auckland the previous day, following a lunch Grisewood had given him a month earlier. Auckland was a 36-year-old Lloyds underwriter, and a frequent speaker in the House of Lords where he took the Tory whip. Various editions of 'Who's Who' indicate that the distinctions he achieved in life were limited to the Presidency of the Institute of Insurance Consultants for 1977, and of the Surrey British Legion in 1983. What had drawn Grisewood to him was a speech he'd made in the House of Lords some years previously in which he'd said that he was 'a keen viewer', especially of BBC programmes. Grisewood thanked Goldie for 'giving up her time for a long talk' with Auckland, and Grisewood was sure she'd agree that 'we' should cultivate this contact. But the point of the letter came at the end. After the visit, Grisewood had driven Auckland from west London back to Waterloo. During the drive. Auckland had indicated that he'd like to return for another visit, and bring his wife. Grisewood wrote:

> It will not have escaped you that he is keen to appear in (sic) television. I have no doubt that Kenneth Lamb [Goldie's Chief Assistant, named as the Hon. K.H.L. Lamb in the staff list] and others will be *all the time* considering whether there is any prospect of a proper and suitable opportunity for him to do so (emphasis added).

A search of the BBC's archives has revealed no appearances by Lord Auckland on any television or radio programme. This probably is a tribute to the integrity of Goldie, Lamb and the 'others'. [33]

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[33] BBC WAC: R4/51/2, note from H. Grisewood to G. Wyndham-Goldie, July 3, 1962. The BBC's Written Archives Centre maintains a file recording all appearance by guests on radio and television programmes. Lord Auckland's name does not appear. Extracts from his speech in the House of Lords debate on Pilkington that month are given below:
'I am sorry that the White Paper recommends ending admags. I rather like *Jim's Inn* and would rather see a drastic cutting of the most aggravating advertisements which appear in programmes like *No Hiding Place*, completely destroying continuity'.

There is also a reference in the correspondence to a certain Mr. Knott. This comes in a list prepared by Colin Shaw, an official in the Secretariat, of the matters on which public support could be sought from outside the BBC.[34] Under the heading 'The White Paper', Shaw wrote: 'need to maintain independence of which the licence fee is the guarantee (if it is)'. Figures like the Conservative MP Sir Cyril Osborne and Lord Strang, former Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, were mentioned as allies whose support could be enlisted. Then under 'The rehabilitation of Pilkington', it read:

> Support for Pilkington's arguments in favour of complementary services and against pay-television, possibly coupled with mild deprecation of the Report's style - probably coming best from individuals within Mr. Grisewood's sphere, at least for the prestige papers, and from Mr. Knott's friends.[35]

The only Knott to appear in BBC staff lists for this period is J.A.C. Knott, OBE, who is described as being 'seconded to the War Office as Adviser on British Forces Network', The possibility that Knott's responsibilities brought him into contact at the War Office with Intelligence or similar operations - perhaps the 'friends' mentioned above - is strengthened by an intriguing note from him in the file, which was clearly not written as part of any duties he may genuinely have had with the British Forces Network. [36] This concerned a letter Sir Robert Renwick, of ATV, had sent to his shareholders on publication of the Report, a copy of which had found its way to the BBC. Adding little to the statement he had already issued to newspapers,[37] it encouraged all shareholders to write 'immediately' to their MPs 'urging the outright rejection of [Pilkington's] dangerous recommendation[s]'. It was 'unthinkable', Renwick insisted, that any Conservative

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'There should be an enquiry into quiz programmes. I am not saying that no prizes should be given, but in these days many young people, in particular, do not realise the value of money when they see these very large sums of money being 'dished out' week by week'.
'The allocation of a third channel to the BBC should be made without delay. I feel that the BBC, which is an old-established Corporation, and has given service now for many years, should be given priority'.
He had got up to speak at 8.13pm, when many peers would have been at dinner.
House of Lords Debates, vol.242, July18, 1962, columns 709/710.

[34] Shaw was later to become the Secretary of the BBC, and then move to the ITA as Director of Television, effectively replacing Bernard Sendall on his retirement.

[35] WAC R4/51/2, note from Colin Shaw, July 5, 1962. The character of Grisewood's 'sphere' may be inferred from his autobiography in which he describes his upbringing in a 13th-century Oxfordshire castle as a member of an ancient Catholic family. His father, he writes proudly, fell out with the Edwardian Conservative Party because it was insufficiently anti-Socialist. See H. Grisewood, *One Thing at a Time*, pp.6-11.

[36] Shaw has said that Knott was 'the keeper' of Hugh Greene's 'black book'. See pp. 115/116, above, for Greene's readiness to draw analogies between BBC campaigns and counter-intelligence operations. Personal interview with Colin Shaw, June 4, 2003.

[37] See p. 148, above.

could give assent to the Report.[38] In a pencilled note, Grisewood, believing in the necessity of countering this assault and any others like it, urged Thirkell to set up 'a reliable system, if it can be contrived, whereby all shareholders' propaganda of this nature finds its way to us. A shareholder in each company would be the thing'.[39] It seems that the responsibility for setting this up fell to Knott. Five days later, Knott wrote to Grisewood to reassure him. Both the Stock Exchange and the Board of Trade, he said, strongly disapproved of Renwick's action in 'dragging politics into business' in the way he had done. He thought that there would be no more such letters. But a director of Deloittes (the highly-regarded financial advisers) and 'an old stockbroker friend' had both undertaken to keep a look-out for him for letters to shareholders, and would keep him posted.[40] Clearly, the BBC could count on friends who were helpfully placed.

On July 25, at his request, the BBC Chairman, Sir Arthur fforde, had a seventy-five minute meeting with Bevins, alone with no advisers present, in Bevins' room at Post Office Headquarters. The following day fforde drew up an exhaustive seven-page account of the meeting, including verbatim accounts of what had been said. Perhaps fforde had been taking notes. The quotations below all come from that document.[41]

The first substantial subject fforde raised was the issue of pay-television. The BBC was against it, he said. The Government was again considering it as a possibility, said Bevins. Fforde then turned to BBC finance, discussion of which occupied nearly three-quarters of the meeting.

> What I was concerned with [fforde wrote] was whether or not we could look forward to getting the equivalent of a clear £5 per paid licence and, if so, from what date, or whether other schemes were under discussion. He asked me what sort of schemes I had in mind. I said that I had heard, but would like to have direct from him, that some Ministers were considering some kind of pooling agreement whereby Government proceeds from television should be channelled into one pocket and then distributed by that pocket among those concerned with the television services. Was there any truth in this talk?

Bevins, in fforde's account, did not initially give a straight answer. It depended, he said, on what happened about the ITA. Eventually he agreed that if the ITV companies were made to pay a levy on their profits direct to the Treasury in addition to rentals paid to the ITA, there could be a considerable surplus. 'That surplus would be allocable (sic) for governmental purposes', said Bevins, and one such purpose, he thought, could well be to make additional payments to the

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[38] A copy was filed in BBC WAC: R4/51/1.
[39] BBC WAC: R4/51/2, note from H. Grisewood, July 5, 1962.
[40] BBC WAC: R4/51/2, note from J.A.C. Knott, July 10, 1962.
[41] BBC WAC: R4/51/3, note of meeting with PMG.

BBC. Fforde replied that just such a possibility had been discussed by the BBC's General Advisory Council and its Board of Governors. What he then had to say seems to have been a warning, expressed as politely as possible. But however oblique, it was nonetheless quite clear.

> Every single person concerned was in agreement that an arrangement which might throw doubt either on the reality of the independence of the BBC or on the image of its independence in the public mind would be completely unacceptable. So would an arrangement which left it to the BBC to argue annually or at any frequent interval with the Treasury. The Overseas Services were indeed in that position and it was only tolerable because the rest of the BBC was not.

The General Advisory Council which had found such a proposal 'completely unacceptable', fforde pointed out, included several prominent politicians, a number of Tories among them. He instanced Lord Aldington, a leading figure in Conservative Central Office, and later wrote in the report that he had forgotten to mention David Gibson-Watt, a senior MP. Bevins tried to turn the conversation to the question of ITV finance. But fforde would not have it. He returned to the funding of the BBC.

> Rather than accept a share of an ITA surplus or anything in the form of an ex gratia grant by some super financial authority, I thought we would be happier to continue with the licence at £4 (provided that we got the fourth pound) and finance ourselves, until it was politically possible for the licence fee to be raised. What did Mr. Bevins himself feel about the licence?
> He said that he was definitely not prepared at this moment to propose that the licence fee should be increased. As to whether or not we should get the fourth pound he had found it very difficult to get any specific answer from Treasury Ministers.

Bevins, who was giving nothing away, can, however, have been left in no doubt that if the Government wished to take the notion of subsidising the BBC from ITV profits any further, it would be faced with implacable opposition, and, at the very least, with the prospect of mass resignations from the BBC Board and Council. And the BBC had very many friends in very high places.[42] Allies could be found, for example, in the Treasury, which, doubtless, had their own reasons of their own for the policy decisions they took, but very likely included some who were part of the 'old boy net', and others who were convinced by the BBC's arguments, which would have reached them through a variety of smoothly-oiled channels. The Treasury now opposed the notion of funding the BBC from any other public source than the licence fee with a vehemence equal to the Corporation's own. Two days before fforde's meeting with Bevins, at the meeting of the Butler Committee on July 23, Boyle, who was attending the Committee for the last time as

[42] It should be noted that the discussion of this topic ended with fforde broaching what he clearly saw as a compromise. If the BBC's revenue could be determined 'solely on the number of paid licences', he said, he 'would not mind too much where the money came from'. He explained that the BBC had got used to receiving only a percentage of the licence fee. If it were now to receive a hundred per cent, 'it would not logically make much difference if what we received was 120 per cent and where the extra 20 per cent came from was a matter of less importance'. Bevins does not seem to have followed up this suggestion.

Financial Secretary,[43] had made it clear that, 'as questions of fiscal policy as well as questions of principle affecting broadcasting policy would arise ... the position of the Chancellor of the Exchequer [on cross-funding the BBC] should be regarded as reserved'.[44] By the time of the Committee's next meeting, towards the end of September, Bevins had been forced to change his position. He now declared that he was no longer proposing that the tax on ITV profits should be used to meet the BBC's growing deficit.[45] Instead he had decided that the problem could be solved if the BBC could be given the whole of the £4 for the financial year 1963/64. This would cost the Exchequer, he estimated, about £13 million a year. But he believed the levy on ITV profits would make the Exchequer some £15 million a year better off from 1964 onwards. Meanwhile, the fee payable by the viewer could be increased in 1965, well after the election. The Committee agreed, though it had to accept that 'in view of the considerations of revenue policy which were involved, the position of the Financial Secretary should be reserved'. The new Financial Secretary was Anthony Barber. He would discuss the matter with the new Chancellor, Reginald Maudling.[46]

Nothing had been resolved by the start of 1963. In a bad-tempered paper for the Cabinet in February, Bevins referred to the BBC, not, he thought, without good reason, believing 'that they can hector the Government into doing as they wish'. Nonetheless, he felt that the Government had to give in. The BBC needed the extra pound, and it should come from remission of the excise duty.

> There is no doubt that even an increase of £1 in the fee would do us political damage out of all proportion to the impost. Whenever an increase has been hinted at in the Press, the public reaction, especially that of elderly people, has been violent.[47]

In March, Maudling was still convinced that the Treasury should hang on to the excise duty, and the viewer should pay. BBC expenditure was 'really' getting out of control, from £38 million in

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[43] He was to return as Minister of Education. His reputation as a liberal - he had, for example, resigned from a junior Government job in opposition to Suez - and his lifelong friendship with Richard Hoggart, which began through both men's' Birmingham connections and persisted throughout Boyle's time at Leeds University after he retired from politics - suggests that the BBC would have seen him as, at least, a potential ally.

[44] TNA: CAB 134/1449. minutes of meeting July 23, 1962.

[45] The Treasury remained on its guard. In January 1963, one Treasury official reminded his colleagues that if any revenue gathered from ITV went to the BBC 'sooner rather than later we should be met with the argument: "Why should we pay for the BBC?". In other words, this line of thought would seriously damage the longer-term possibilities of getting any revenue from such very obvious candidates'. TNA: T319/474, note from F.R.P.Vinter, January 22, 1963.

[46] TNA: CAB 134/1449, minutes of meeting September 25, 1962.

[47] TNA: CAB C (63) 21, memorandum from PMG, February 14, 1963.

the previous year to £66 million in two years' time, and 'some better means of vetting it should be sought'.[48] A special Cabinet sub-committee, chaired by Macmillan himself, was convened to settle the matter at the end of the month. Maudling again made his case.

> The scope for reduction of indirect taxation was limited, and in the Chancellor's view, such reductions as might prove to be possible should be made in relation to goods and services which were of greater social importance than television. It would be preferable, as a matter of principle, that viewers should be made to pay, through an increased licence fee, for improvements in service.[49]

Once again, political objections were raised, including, again, the suggestion that the money could come from the proposed new taxes on ITV. In the sub-committee as in the Cabinet, the Treasury ministers were on their own. Maudling promised, again, to think again. Later that day, he had.

He circulated a note to say that although he was still opposed to 'an Exchequer subvention' on grounds of cost and of principle, he had 'with much reluctance' now agreed to the remission of the excise duty. But he insisted on putting the date back to October 1 that year, as he still believed that BBC expenditure should be 'looked at'. This would not have pleased the Corporation had it known, but, for the time being at any rate, the BBC had won.

It was not until August 1965 that the fee payable by viewers was raised by the Labour Government to five pounds, by which time the BBC was campaigning for six pounds.[50] In practice, as the Annan Report pointed out in 1977, BBC finances were saved by a substantial increase in television ownership which continued throughout the 1960s, rising from 10.4 million households with sets in 1960 to over 15 million in 1968, when a supplementary £5 fee for colour television was added, providing the BBC with another source of increasing income.[51]

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[48] TNA: CAB 21/5991, note from the Chancellor, March 8, 1963.
[49] TNA: CAB 21/5991, minutes of special sub-committee, March 26, 1963. Members were, in addition to Macmillan, Maudling and Bevins, were Martin Redmayne, the Chief Whip, and John Boyd-Carpenter.
[50] Briggs *History*, vol. 5, pp.501/502.
[51] *Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting, (the Annan Committee)*, Cmnd 6753 (London: HMSO, 1977), paras.10.2/10.3.

(v): **The reform of ITV**

Bernard Sendall's official history of Independent Television, produced in the early 1980s, described the way in which the ITA saw itself at this time. It believed that it had been seriously misrepresented and unfairly treated by Pilkington, and generally given insufficient credit for a system 'high in popular esteem', which 'with no more than a few changes in organization and inner power balance' could become 'a service of excellence'. Opposed to that was a Postmaster-General who was a 'tough' and 'ambitious' politician 'determined to make his personal mark'. What seems to have annoyed Sendall and his colleagues was that Bevins was 'persuaded of the rightness of a competitive commercial broadcasting service, but was equally conscious of the political bonuses to be earned by the taming of over-mighty subjects and the mulcting of the over-swollen money bags'.[52]

As we can now see. this was greatly to over-estimate Bevins' influence on policy-making. It was the Government as a whole, including a majority of the Cabinet and, probably, most of the Civil Service, which wished to mulct the money-bags. In his own short and grievance-strewn account of his career, Bevins made clear his commitment to private enterprise. He wrote, for example, that, until his tenure, the Post Office had 'absurdly' failed to make use of the advertising space on 20,000 Crown Post Office windows and the sides of 35,000 vehicles. 'The Post Office', he wrote proudly, 'now uses these valuable advertising facilities to some systematic effect'.[53] For the future, he called, on the basis of 'knowledge and experience, not on doctrinal grounds' for telephone services to be 'hived off to private enterprise'.[54]

But broadcasting, he argued, was a special case. He had been unable to accept the whole of Pilkington.

> [It]would have destroyed commercial television. I did not want that for I happen to believe in competition. What I hoped for was a solution which would be fair to the taxpayer: which would give the public better television and would give the companies a fair crack of the whip.[55]

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[52] Sendall, *ITV in Britain,* vol. 2, pp.160/161.
[53] Bevins, *The Greasy Pole*, p.74. The context suggests that only Post Office services were advertised on these spaces.
[54] Ibid, p.75. Margaret Thatcher began this process in 1984, only completing it in 1993.
[55] Ibid, p.87.

And, he might have added, reduce the tension within the Conservative Party, and minimise any electoral damage. To do so, he was determined that other values should be promoted as well as those of private enterprise and free competition.

There remained, among many Conservatives, though to a lesser degree than among politicians on the left, a residual suspicion of advertisers, advertising and salesmanship generally. In April, in a paper submitted to the Butler Committee, Bevins expressed his determination, and that of his officials, to regulate television advertising more firmly. He anticipated that in the new Television Bill an average of six minutes per hour of advertising would be specified, with a maximum of seven minutes in any one hour. Advertising magazines should be considered advertising and not programmes. Parliamentary Counsel should be consulted on a new, and more restrictive, definition of 'natural breaks'. Bevins drew attention to the criticism 'frequently' made:

> that some advertisements are excessively strident and repetitive in a puerile way. I find that this is the most general criticism of television advertising. It irritates young and old alike to hear, day in day out, "Pal meat for dogs - prolongs active life" repeated several times an evening.[56]

Much of this was eventually to find its way into the Act.

Bevins' Director of Radio and Television Services in the Post Office, Alan Wolstencroft, who had almost certainly drafted this paper, was a powerful influence on him. He was a career civil servant, educated at a Lancashire grammar school not unlike Bevins' in Liverpool, although he, unlike Bevins, had gone on to university (in his case, Cambridge). He had been seconded to the ITA as its first Secretary, leaving in the summer before it went on the air. According to Sendall who, on becoming Deputy Director-General, effectively replaced him, 'his value to Clark and Fraser was immense ... he was a highly intelligent and lucid administrator ... his secondment was crucial'.[57] Dennis Lawrence has said that Bevins and Wolstencroft were very similar. Wolstencroft was politically a Conservative, and a *Daily Telegraph* reader like Bevins, who listened to his views 'with great respect'. Evidently his experience of the ITV system in its very early days gave him some authoritative insights into the way it still worked, and could work, and he is likely to have shared the frustrations felt by many of its members and staff about Fraser's *laissez-faire* approach. According to Laurence, Wolstencroft was 'pretty neutral' about the Report, but he was a firm supporter of its account of the purposes of broadcasting, and thought they

[56] TNA: CAB134/1449, CBT (62) 10, memorandum by the PMG, April 10, 1962. Bevins evidently watched more ITV than might be expected of a Government Minister.
[57] Sendall, *ITV in Britain*, vol. 1, p.62.

should be enshrined in the Act. Wolstencroft, Lawrence has said, believed profoundly in 'the ethos of public service'.[58]

Internal evidence suggests that it was he who drafted a six-page document drawn up in the Post Office within days of receiving the Report 'to consider possible alternative arrangements to the revised structure for ITV suggested by Pilkington.'[59]

It began by declaring that 'a defensible alternative' must:

(a) reduce the excessive profits of the programme contractors
(b) reduce the control by the "big four" contractors
(c) improve balance and standards in programmes.

It went on to construct a detailed system of regulation of ITV which would limit the programme companies' freedom of action - and their profits - almost as much as Pilkington.

The companies would pay for their licences in two parts, the first to cover ITA costs, and the second 'to represent the balance of the true market value of the concession, to be paid to the Exchequer by the ITA', The ITA would have to consult the Post Office and the Treasury before determining these costs. The second part of the rental 'could be calculated in a number of ways':

(a) a straightforward levy on profits
(b) competitive tendering: contracts being let to the highest bidder (among suitably qualified applicants)
(c) the ITA or Government itself establishing what it considered to be a market rental, i.e. what the market would bear.
(d) a percentage of advertising revenue.

In considering them we must realise that the situation under which new contracts will be negotiated will be fundamentally different from the present one, with three or four programmes instead of two, more serious programmes in peak time etc. This factor would tell in favour of (a) or (d) rather than (b) or (c).

The ITA had suggested that it should be given a degree of control over arrangements for networking. That was not enough, argued the document's author.

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[58] Personal interview with Lawrence, March 30, 2002. According to Lawrence, Wolstencroft was later due to become Director-General of the Post Office but the appointment was blocked by a Labour Postmaster-General, John Stonehouse, who objected to his Conservative political beliefs.

[59] TNA: HO 256/421, an unsigned note of meeting on alternatives to Pilkington, June 4 1962. Written amendments and additions to the typescript are in Wolstencroft's handwriting; it seems to have been typed by an assistant under his supervision. The quotations below are all from this document.

> In my view Pilkington's attitude to ITV stems largely from the bad public image which the Authority has fostered of itself and its functions. I think that it will be essential for the future that the ITA, as the public accountable body, should be and be seen to be in real control of the system.

Several pages detailed the mechanisms by which the ITA could achieve full control. Contracts between the ITA and the companies would specify the number of hours of 'local' programmes the companies would supply, which could carry local advertising only, and both 'commercial' and 'non-commercial' network programmes. The proportion of 'serious' to 'other programmes' in both peak and non-peak hours would be laid down by the ITA. Some hours would be reserved 'to be allotted to the companies on the basis of merit, as determined by the ITA. There would be 'a reserve power' for the ITA to produce programmes itself, which 'would no doubt be an essential sanction'. 'We must realise', the document concluded, that 'the opposition of some of the companies (the big ones) to a scheme of this kind would be almost as bitter as to Pilkington pure and simple'.

Over the summer. Wolstencroft continued to promote the case for the ITA to be involved in the general planning of ITV programmes 'from the start', as he put it, underlining these words in a note circulated in the Post Office in August.

> On this basis the Act could say something to the effect that the programmes would be planned by the ITA in consultation with the companies, but produced by the companies. This would make a world of difference both in presentation and practice. It would bring the Authority firmly onto the stage and put an end to their attitude of "non-commitment" in the production of the ITV service.[60]

The same points were put the following day at a meeting with Robert Fraser and Bernard Sendall of the ITA, at which Wolstencroft and Lawrence accompanied Sir Ronald German, the Director-General of the Post Office. [61] Sendall was later to write that there was now to emerge 'some signs of growing tension, not to say resentment, in the relationship of the Authority and its staff with their minister and his officers'.[62] Oddly, despite the praise lavished on Wolstencroft in Volume I of Sendall's history, published in the following year, there is no mention at all of him in Volume II, from which the above quotation is taken. This is despite its detailed accounts of meetings between the Post Office and the ITA, in which Wolstencroft played a leading part. The ITA had been angered by some of the attacks directed at it, and it seems likely that ill-feeling on the part of its personnel may have been aggravated by resentment that Wolstencroft had changed sides. In Sendall's account, Bevins' political ambition was the driving force behind the call for change, in

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[60] TNA: HO 256/421, note from A. Wolstencroft, August 9, 1962.
[61] TNA: HO 256/421, note of meeting August 10. 1962.
[62] Sendall, *ITV in Britain*, vol. 2, p.154.

which he was being assisted by German - 'an over-zealous top civil servant'.[63] In October, according to Sendall, Fraser was to find 'offensive' a note from German - again, almost certainly drafted by Wolstencroft - which referred to the 'much more prominent and powerful position' the Authority was expected to have under the new Act. It would 'correspond to their position as the answerable public body ... and will go hand in hand with ... a correspondingly enhanced public prestige for the Authority'. What, it seems, particularly annoyed Fraser was the implication that the ITA had been content for their position and public prestige to be 'related in inverse proportion to the power of the Big Four'.[64] A more disinterested historian than Sendall may now see that as an accurate depiction of the contemporary reality, and, perhaps, detect the odour of perceived personal betrayal in both Fraser's and Sendall's nostrils.

Earlier, during a wet holiday at the end of August in the Brecon Beacons, Wolstencroft had sent German a handwritten note to say that Fraser had been phoning him at home. 'He is still unreconciled to the prospect of the ITA being really in charge of programme planning. He repeated that this would mean the end of ITV as we know it'. He was right, of course, said Wolstencroft. But Fraser had himself talked of altering the franchise areas to replace the big four with six smaller companies so as to reduce their power. That, however, would not be enough. Wolstencroft wrote that he had told Fraser that 'Parliament will expect' the power of the big four ITV companies 'to be regulated explicitly in the new Bill'.[65] Change was needed. It would happen.

Negotiations - Sendall says they were 'patient' - continued between the Post Office and the ITA. They were made more difficult, says Sendall, when the ITV companies produced programme schedules for the autumn not markedly different from previous autumn quarters (the busiest time of year for advertising). 'Quiz shows return as ITV defies Pilkington' said the *Daily Express*.[66] Advertising magazines, whose abolition had been prefigured in the July White Paper, still had a prominent place.[67] Either the companies were enjoying mounting a challenge not just to

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[63] Ibid, p.159.
[64] Ibid, p.155. The note signed by German, dated October 12, 1962, is also to be found in TNA: HO 256/421. Post Office files contain a number of such memos and letters drafted by Wolstencroft which were signed by German, who seems to have left this area of policy very much to Wolstencroft. Sendall points out in footnotes that Sir Neil Carmichael, deputy and later acting Chairman of the ITA, who temporarily replaced Kirkpatrick on his retirement in October, had held 'senior positions' in the Sudanese Ministry of Finance at a time when German had been Assistant Director of Posts in Sudan. Sendall, *ITV in Britain*, vol. 2, notes 4 & 5, p.383.
[65] TNA: HO 256/421, undated note from Wolstencroft to DG.
[66] *The Daily Express* August 23, 1962, quoted in Sendall 1983, p.162.
[67] The present writer began directing in ITV studios some years after 'admags' had been banned. It may be worth noting that studio executives, directors and technicians then remembered them with much nostalgic

Pilkington but to the Government as a whole, or they were simply making as much money as they could while they were allowed. Nonetheless, Fraser believed that the negotiations had been successful, even if the ITA had been forced to go far beyond what it had declared necessary in its evidence to Pilkington, which had basically called for little change.[68] Now, as it pointed out in letters to German and Bevins, the ITA had agreed to 'consultation about, scrutiny and advance approval of individual company programme schedules, plus a statutory committee to consider network schedules, chaired by the Authority', as well a levy on profits as 'the most reasonable and defensible' way of dealing with them.[69] Most of the more detailed suggestions for ensuring ITA control, as spelled out in Wolstencroft's paper in June, had been dropped. Although the role of the ITA was to be hugely increased, programme planning would still be left in the hands of the companies, as well as programme production. One crucial element, of course, would necessarily remain in the hands of a more activist Post Office and government. That was the appointment of members of the Authority and its senior staff. Wolstencroft put it plainly in a note to German in January:

> The members of the Authority are likely to find it difficult to move from the hitherto *laissez-faire* conception fostered by Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick and Sir Robert Fraser to the more dynamic role which the Government is now envisaging for them ... If of course any individual among them really objects to the idea of the Authority playing a central role in Independent Television, it will be open to him or her not to accept extension, if they are offered it, after 1964.[70]

Doubtless, he would have said something similar to Fraser about the role he would play.[71]

The Cabinet, meeting on November 15, largely approved the draft of a second White Paper, which incorporated the agreements with the ITA that were taking shape. Specifically, ministers decided that 'a satisfactory balance' had been achieved between 'the extreme positions taken up on the one hand by Pilkington' and 'on the other hand by those who thought that the present system should not be altered'.[72] That latter group certainly included the leadership of the ITV companies,

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affection because of the technical difficulties they caused, and pride in the virtuosity needed to overcome them, live. In the late 1960s, inside the industry, admags were much missed.

[68] Cmnd. 1819, ITA memorandum, October 1960, p.422. The ITA had recommended to Pilkington that it should be given the power 'to fix the price at which programmes should be made available from one company to any other in the network'. But it specifically insisted that this would not enable it to oblige any one company to take a programme from another company.

[69] Letters from Fraser to German, November 16, 1962, and Carmichael to Bevins, November 29, 1962, quoted in Sendall, *ITV in Britain*, vol. 2, p. 159.

[70] TNA: HO 256/421, note from Wolstencroft, January 11, 1963.

[71] Fraser was not to retire from the ITA until 1970, when he was replaced by Brian Young. See p. 3 above. Sendall did not replace Fraser, as he might have expected, but remained as Deputy DG until his retirement in 1977.

[72] TNA: CAB CC(62) 69, minutes of meeting November 15, 1962.

and a number of Conservatives inside and outside the Cabinet. The week after the Cabinet meeting, Robert Renwick and Norman Collins of ATV came to the Conservative backbench broadcasting committee to declare that 'there was nothing wrong with the way things were'. There were certainly no 'excessive' profits, at least when the cost of a second service for ITV - when it came - would be 'a further million and a half' a year. Not that the money would be found from the profits of the current programme contractors. Renwick and Collins again made their now-familiar case that ATV wanted a second programme in competition with themselves because they felt 'that the evils of monopoly in commercial television had grown as large as the evils previously found in the BBC's monopoly'. It seems this claim was given a respectful and sympathetic hearing.[73]

The fact that the Government had made up its mind on ITV was confirmed with the publication of the White Paper on December 18. It contained some praise for the system as it was: many of the programmes on ITV, it said, were of good quality and were popular; most were produced by the four large companies; any system would have to be constructed on the basis of such large units, as they alone could possess the resources for expensive and specialised programme-making. But the influence of Pilkingtonian ideas was obvious. The larger companies exercised too much control. It should be given to the Authority, 'which should generally take a much more positive role in the affairs of independent television'. The Authority was to chair a Committee of all the Companies. With 'a commanding position in the affairs of ITV', it was to be responsible for the shape, content, balance and quality of the service as a whole'. The companies should have contracts for 'not more than three years at a time' [74], and their renewal would be 'in peril' if 'quality failed to measure up to promise'.[75] On programme standards, the Government was, said the White Paper, 'seriously concerned to prevent the danger not only of excessive violence, but also of excessive triviality in the treatment of programmes'. No attempt was made to define or quantify 'excessive', 'violence' or 'triviality'. These were matters 'which must depend on the vigilance of the broadcasting authority', and discussions had taken place with both the BBC and the ITA (as we have seen, many Conservatives had believed that the BBC was as guilty as ITV,

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[73] CPA: CRD 2/20/14, minutes of meeting November 21, 1962. Renwick and Collins were sympathetically quoted by several members who spoke at the following meeting addressed by Bevins, after the publication of his second White Paper. See the minutes of the meeting on December 19. For comments on ATV's claims, see p. 37.

[74] During the Committee Stage of the subsequent Bill, as a concession to the companies the contract length was extended to six years.

[75] *Broadcasting: Further Memorandum on the Report of the Committee on Broadcasting 1960* Cmnd. 1893 (London: HMSO, 1962), paras. 8-14.

or nearly as guilty, in respect of 'violence' and 'triviality').[76] There was no evidence of public demand for a second ITA channel. It might prove to be 'desirable', and while the Government did not propose a second ITA channel in the near future, it did not dismiss the possibility of doing so 'later'.[77] The Authority was to have the power 'to regulate practice with regard to advertising and natural breaks', and also 'to act to avoid stridency and undue repetitiveness in advertisements'.[78]And, under the heading 'Profits', the Government recorded its opinion that although ITV profits might decline after 1964, 'in the larger areas' they were still likely to be 'substantial'. So the companies would be required to make 'substantial' payments to the government, calculated by reference to their profits.[79]

Robert Renwick immediately rushed out a statement attacking the White Paper. It showed 'an appalling ignorance of the facts of television'. First, if ITV was to maintain anything like its present level of audiences, it had to have a second programme. Secondly, the suggestion of an extra tax on profits was 'extraordinary'. 'At this rate, there will be hardly any profits at all'. And thirdly:

> To hand over to the ITA the control of networking is academic nonsense. Programming is a matter for experts, not for a committee. Really, the Government must pull itself together and decide whether it believes in the future of television or whether it wants to clamp it down with the dead hand of bureaucracy.[80]

At Westminster the following evening, Bevins, defending himself, warned the backbench committee that 'it was not good for the Government to be constantly associated with television tycoons'.[81] One day later, the Government published its Bill, which in many respects had the effect of tightening the provisions in the White Paper. For example, a concern had been expressed by officials in the Treasury that the proposed profits tax could be circumvented by companies being creative in their accounting methods, and lavish in their funding of subsidiary companies. It sought therefore to close this loophole. The section on the formula for assessing the profits on which the companies would be taxed read, in part:

> The formulas ... shall be framed by reference, among other things, to the annual profits of the programme contractors, and, if it appears to the Postmaster General that the value of the public

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[76] Ibid, para.38. Presumably the White Paper meant to say that it wished to prevent excessive violence and triviality *in* programmes.
[77] Ibid, para.20.
[78] Ibid, para. 36.
[79] Ibid, para. 27.
[80] TNA: HO 256/440, statement by Sir Robert Renwick, December 18, 1962.
[81] CPA: CRD2/20/14, minutes of meeting December 19, 1962.

> concessions which programme companies enjoy may be reflected in the profits of companies or other bodies corporate in which they have interests, may be framed by reference to the annual profits of those companies or other bodies.[82]

A symbolic addition in the Bill was the inclusion, in Clause 2, of words taken from the BBC Charter. They laid down, for the first time, as has already been noted, that 'it shall be the duty of the Authority to provide the television broadcasting services as a service for disseminating information, education and entertainment', in that order.[83]

On the evening of the White Paper's publication, Renwick had had dinner with Maudling. In a letter sent early in the New Year, addressed to 'My Dear Reggie' at his home address, Renwick reminded the Chancellor of how, in the course of 'a very enjoyable dinner' he'd said how much he disliked the White Paper. But now, he thought the proposals even worse than he had then. Ostensibly, it was on constitutional grounds to do with the role of the Post Office in setting the tax level to which he most objected.

> The tax on profits [is] surely unprecedented as the extent of it [is] to be arbitrarily decided upon by a body outside the control of the Treasury. I cannot imagine that [it] will receive the consent of you as a Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer. To me, this seems to be directly contrary to all Conservative principles.[84]

It was signed 'Yours ever, Bob'. A note in the file records that the Chancellor 'had sent a short personal reply to Sir Robert saying he could not say anything, but he did see his point'.

Sendall records that 'press reaction was singularly lacking in the stridency of its earlier response to Pilkington'. The *Sunday Telegraph*, however, echoed what Sendall called the now-familiar argument that a second ITA service 'would at once be both the logical next step against broadcasting monopoly and the simplest way of reducing company profits'.[85] But the verdict of the *Financial Times* was the most clear-sighted, if also the most critical. Copies of it were circulated in the Treasury.

> It now appears that the new powers to be conferred on the ITA will enable it to operate in much the way that the Pilkington Committee recommended, and to turn itself into something not unlike the BBC. Its control over advertising will, if it chooses to make use of its powers, be as complete as if it were selling the advertising time itself. Its control over programmes will be as complete, if it wishes, as if it were itself arranging them ... it certainly amounts to something more than the

[82] *Television Bill* (London: HMSO, 1962), clause 7 (4).
[83] Ibid, clause 2 (1) *(a)*
[84] TNA: HO 256/441, letter from Sir Robert Renwick, January 2, 1963.
[85] Sendall, *ITV in Britain*, vol. 1, p.169, quoting the *Sunday Telegraph*, December 23, 1962.

benevolent supervision of networking arrangements. It is more like a power to write the TV Times. [86]

(vi): **A licence to lose money?**

ATV is prepared to go out of business unless the Government drops its proposed levy on gross advertising revenue...It does not intend to apply for its licence to be renewed next year if the charge is imposed...Mr. Norman Collins, Deputy Chairman, said... 'To hold shares in an ITV company is to be the possessor, if I may adapt a famous phrase, of a licence to lose money'.

The *Daily Telegraph*, May 21, 1963.

While waiting for Pilkington, the Government had decided to claim a small share for itself of ITV profits. After the Committee had been sitting for eight months, Selwyn Lloyd, then Chancellor of the Exchequer and, as we have seen, the spiritual father of commercial television, announced in his 1961 Budget speech an excise duty on gross receipts from advertisements, payable by the programme companies at a rate fixed eventually at 11 per cent. In 1963, it was expected to raise £8 million a year. But, according to Sendall, as a means of curbing what he called the 'stupendous' profitability of the big companies, Television Advertising Duty - or TAD - was 'pathetically ineffective'.[87] Demand for advertising space in the areas served by the big four was so great that they could simply increase their rates to cover the duty. The smaller companies, however, had less strength in the marketplace, and were less able to pass it on to advertisers. The ITA had supported the case they had made against TAD on these grounds, and had been campaigning for it to be replaced by a tax on profits. Bevins was sympathetic; he'd asked the Chancellor to look into the possibilities.

The Treasury was, eventually, to agree. But it was reluctant to lose the proceeds of a tax that was hard to evade. Its replacement had to be equally secure, and it was concerned, as has already been noted, that the draft financial clause in the Bill, Clause 7, was open to avoidance. Displaying a shrewd familiarity with the workings of the industry, one Treasury official wrote in December:

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[86] *The Financial Times,* December 21, 1962. A copy of the cutting is in TNA: T319/474.
[87] Sendall, *ITV in Britain*, vol. 1, p.299/302.

> For example, it may be possible for the programme company to reduce its own profits to negligible proportions (and thus largely escape the special levy) by purchasing artists' services etc. from an associated company at inflated prices, thus pushing the profits sideways, as it were, into that associated company. If the shareholders in the programme company also owned the associated company, they would still ultimately get the profits, but unabated by levy.[88]

The Bill had had to be drawn up 'in considerable haste'. To devise really effective means of closing all the possible loopholes could take 'several weeks, or even months'. Some days later, the same official, John Littlewood, wondered whether 'even at this late stage' there might be some other way of achieving the general objective, such as increasing the level of TAD currently being charged.[89] By mid-January, he was telling colleagues that 'it was now possible that the levy ... would be related to advertising receipts instead of to profits ... this has not yet been put to Ministers'.[90]

But they were quick to agree. By early February Bevins had presented a paper to the Cabinet, with Maudling's support, which proposed altering the basis of the levy in the Bill from profits to gross advertising receipts. TAD had been applied at a flat rate. The new duty would be applied on a sliding scale, and there would be 'a free slice' of income amounting to £1.25 million before anything became payable, ensuring that the smaller companies might pay little or no duty at all. Any income the companies had from programme sales or anything else would be unaffected.[91] In the subsequent Cabinet meeting, there was discussion only of the danger of setting a precedent for 'discriminatory taxation by regulation'. It was, however, readily agreed that the levy was not essentially a form of taxation at all, but a means of obtaining different payments or rentals for different franchises.[92]

Bevins claimed in his book that Iain Macleod, then Leader of the House, attempted to delay introduction of the Bill, telling him that it was 'unpopular with Government backbenchers'. That, said Bevins, was 'far from the truth'. [93] In any case, the second reading of the Bill went ahead without a division on February 25, after Bevins had announced the change in the basis of the levy. No serious objections were raised.

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[88] TNA: T319/474, note from J. Littlewood, December 7, 1962.
[89] TNA: T 319/474, note from J. Littlewood, December 14, 1962.
[90] TNA: T 319/474, note from J. Littlewood, January 18, 1963.
[91] TNA: CAB C(63) 10, memorandum from PMG, February 4, 1963.
[92] TNA: CAB 134/1449, minutes of meeting February 7, 1963.
[93] Bevins, *The Greasy Pole*, p.90.

Little mention was made in the debate on second reading of a second channel for the ITA. Bevins had previously insisted at a meeting of the backbench committee that there was no great demand for it from the general public, the Conservative Party or 'the great majority' of ITV companies. It came from one source only, ATV.[94] But another voice had joined in the campaign on the morning of the debate. Selwyn Lloyd, now a considerable figure on the backbenches, had written an article broadly supportive of the Bill in that day's *Daily Telegraph*. His biographer was to write that his 'Beveridge past' was now 'resurfacing', and that the performance of ITV had been 'one of the great disappointments of Selwyn's life'.[95] In his article, though, he declared that he was pleased to have been called 'the Father of Independent Television', and, in spite of some obvious defects in the child, he was still proud of his offspring. He did now accept that there was a need for 'some control'. But, crucially, he was concerned about 'the new form of profits tax' in the Bill, and he thought also that Pilkington had shown 'a bias against ITV'.

> What is needed is more competition, more variety, more opportunity for programmes that are different. I am therefore in favour of the second ITV channel, if possible at once ... Today I doubt whether any fair-minded person could dispute that the existence in Britain of a competitive independent service has improved television broadcasting as a whole. In other words, my minority view [on the Beveridge Committee] has been thoroughly vindicated.[96]

Bevins took up Lloyd's points. There would be a second ITV channel. But not yet.

> Some of my honourable friends feel - quite wrongly, I assure them - that there is prejudice [in the Government] against private enterprise in the world of television. There is no prejudice; none whatever; far from it ... the Government view is that we ought to see how the reorganization of ITV works out before we authorise a second dose of the medicine, or tonic.[97]

The echo of Pilkington may or may not have been deliberate. Lloyd did not speak. Nor were there any dissenting speeches. But the mood on the Government benches allowed Fred Willey, opening for the opposition, to congratulate Bevins on his 'coolness in face of the bristling of honourable Members behind him with their prepared briefs'.[98] One Conservative backbencher, the former BBC broadcaster (and member of the Edwards Committee), Geoffrey Johnson-Smith,

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[94] CPA: CRD 2/20/14, minutes of meeting February 20, 1963.
[95] D.R. Thorpe, *Selwyn Lloyd* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989), p.370.
[96] *The Daily Telegraph*, February 25, 1963.
[97] *House of Commons Debates*, February 25, 1963, column 919.
[98] *H. of C., Debates*, February 25, 1963, column 922. Hansard has 'coyness'. 'Coolness' is my suggestion, based on the context. Extracts from Willey's speech give a flavour of the opposition's tactics, and enable the political strength of their case to be gauged. 'We and the viewers generally are concerned by ... the violence, the too narrow choice offered, and, above all, the triviality which pervades a good deal of television ... when one thinks of the record of the Government - bingo, betting shops, "I'm all right, Jack", "You have never had it so good" - it is not surprising that, contemporaneously, there is a good deal of triviality on television' (column 923). Like others, he seemed not to understand that people might enjoy bingo, betting and triviality, let alone violence

demonstrated that some Conservatives were unhappy about being associated with the electronic marketplace:

> We should ask ourselves how much of our resources should go into the advertising industry ... Should the marketplace be brought into my living room every time I switch on my television set? Commercial television ... should not be allowed to grow to too great an extent. [99]

Bevins was later to claim that he had only become aware that month that 'a small group' of Conservative MPs were now hostile to the Bill.

> I could hardly turn in the Palace of Westminster without being badgered. I had to choose my company very carefully in the members' dining-room if I wanted to avoid indigestion ... during the week [following the debate] pressure behind the scenes mounted.[100]

Talking in an unguarded moment in March to a *Daily Express* reporter, Bevins said his opponents were 'the two-channel boys'. They were, he said critically, a 'pressure group'.[101] He was to insist, altogether plausibly, that his remarks had not been intended for publication. The article is worth quoting at some length.

The headline was 'The Postmaster-General Confesses'.

> "Up to now" Mr. Bevins said "the Government has failed in its duty to the taxpayer as far as ITV is concerned. They really have had a licence to print money, without being made to produce the programmes to match. I want to change that".
>
> A large TV set stared across the room as Mr. Bevins, very much the working politician in his blue suit, spectacles in top pocket, and much smoking, talked of pressure groups.
>
> "Certainly there are pressure groups. The House divides itself. There are those elected in 1959 who opposed ITV and say BBC is better, There are the much older boys who think there never should have been anything but the BBC. And there are the middle group, the 45 to 55 boys, who have somehow or other become entangled with ITV and say the two channels are equal. Up till about a month ago I was congratulating myself that I had steered clear of pressure groups, but then they started.
>
> "The first thing they had a go at was two channels for ITV ... what these two-channel boys are really saying is: let two independent companies have a seven-day run and battle it out. This will put their advertising revenue up by, say, 25%, but it will put up their production costs by about

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[99] *H. of C. Debates,* February 25, 1963, col 1006.
[100] Bevins, *The Greasy Pole,* p.90.
[101] *'Pressure Group'* was the title given by the American scholar, Professor H.H. Wilson, to his 1961 book on the original campaign for commercial television. It had annoyed many Conservatives, who believed 'pressure group' to be a pejorative term, detecting a suggestion that members were motivated less by conviction than by considerations of political advantage, or even by the prospect of financial gain. H.H.Wilson, *Pressure Group: the Campaign for Commercial Television* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1961). See also Sendall, *ITV in Britain,* vol. one, p. 5.

> 30%. So they will make less profit. Then they will say that the tax on profits should be reduced. Then they will make more profit. This I will not have.
>
> "They'll also want reduced rentals on transmitters. But I shall resist this with all I have. And I don't give a damn if this makes me a man alone. This is what I believe".
>
> Mr. Bevins, who admits to only really watching TV at weekends, lit another cigarette and went on: "A lot of what I see is awful. It has to be improved. I want to see much more time given to serious programmes. Every inducement must be given to all sections of TV to make it worthwhile to produce first-class programmes ... I have not yet said some of these things publicly because if I did I should have half the Tory party round my neck" [102]

On the article's appearance, according to Bevins' book, Martin Redmayne, the Chief Whip, and John Morrison, Chairman of the 1922 Committee, demanded that he should appear before the committee to answer questions, and to apologise.[103] Bevins, in his own account as well as in the minutes of the meeting, explained that there had been a power failure during the interview, and by candle-light alone he had been unable to see whether the reporter was taking notes. But he had carefully and specifically said that the interview was for background and not for publication.[104] What had particularly given offence, apart from the reference to 'pressure groups', was the suggestion that it had been decided that there was to be no second channel for ITV. That was still, Bevins insisted, disingenuously, an open question. In fact, he was determined to leave it an open question for a number of years, until, at the very least, ITV had had the chance, in his terms, to improve. He described in his book what he thought were the tactics of the pro-ITV Conservatives.

> They had already tried to secure a second commercial programme and that had not come off. Now they would try to force the Government either to abandon the levy or to emasculate it ... If, however, this frontal attack failed they would once again press for a second commercial programme, by say 1965.[105]

If they were able to extract this concession, they would then be able to argue that there was no point in applying the levy from 1964, as, very shortly afterwards, the companies would be unable to pay it, their revenue from advertising having been drastically reduced by competition. But one result would be that Bevins' career would be over; others in the Government would look foolish for having supported him; and further damage would be done to Tory morale in the run-up to the General Election. The clear priority, therefore, was to establish that the levy *could* be paid without too much damage to the industry, and to ensure that the clause stayed in the Bill, with no commitment to any date for ITV2.

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[102] *The Daily Express,* March 5, 1963.
[103] However, the files of the Broadcasting Committee, which contain an account of the meeting, suggest that it was that committee in front of which Bevins appeared.
[104] Bevins, *The Greasy Pole*, p.94; CPA: CRD 2/20/14, minutes of meeting March 6, 1963.
[105] Bevins, *The Greasy Pole*, p.92.

Presumably foreseeing the political difficulties that lay ahead, officials in the Post Office had written to the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising in December 1962 to ask for its estimates of the future pattern of spending on advertising. The Institute supplied figures it had produced for its own purposes earlier in the month. They showed that from 1958 to 1962, gross total expenditure on advertising in all media had risen from 2.0% of net national income to 2.2%, that is, it was increasing at a rate of more than 2% per annum. Spending on *television* advertising had risen over the same period from 0.22% of net national income to 0.35%,at the substantially higher rate of about 15% per annum. In 1961, according to the IPA's figures, ITV's income from advertisers was £53 million. Their provisional total for 1962 was £60 million. On the cautious premise that overall spending on advertising would stay at the same level, and, equally, that spending on television advertising could rise, to 0.40% of national income by 1966, and then stay there until 1970, estimates were as follows for the years to come:

1964 £72m
1966 £81m
1968 £87m
1970 £94m.[106]

It was this statistical material on which the Post Office and the Treasury were to rely in their discussions with the companies. Strenuously as they had objected to the proposal of a levy on profits, they now began a furious lobbying process, supported by the ITA, against the proposal for it to be replaced by a levy on turnover. Throughout March and April. there were several contentious meetings between Ministers and civil servants on the one hand, and the companies, their accountants, and the ITA, on the other.

Meanwhile, the industry case was being made vociferously in public. The first blow was struck in a letter to *The Times* from senior producers at Granada, giving their address as the company's London headquarters, thus suggesting that it had been instigated by the company itself. Doubtless, the producers, all widely respected, would be thought more likely to incur public support than the company management. They wrote:

> We fear that the ITV companies might well seek to recoup their lost profits by greater economies in production costs. To prevent this we urge that the Bill be amended ... so that

[106] TNA: HO 246/440, letter from J.P. O'Connor, Director IPA to J.F. Hanson, Post Office, December 31. 1062.

> all money spent on making programmes is deducted from the gross revenue figures on which the levy will be paid.[107]

Other letters followed in quick succession from prominent individuals and industry groups, making similar points.[108]

Sidney Bernstein came out into the open with a speech criticising the Bill at Granada's Annual General Meeting on March 8, which the company featured in a display advertisement in the *Daily Telegraph.* He'd spoken of the 'Dream Bill' which Granada would like to see.

> [It] would encourage a Company to put real money and effort into making good programmes and discourage them from simply sitting on their profits ... [It] would be worded so as to establish and protect the principle that ITV can put quality into its programmes without having the money it puts into those programmes taxed. What you tax is the profit that comes out at the end of the day - not the money put in at the beginning which alone makes the day's work possible.

He was reminded by the Television Bill of the (recently passed) Betting and Gaming Act, which treated gambling as a dangerous form of indulgence which needed to be controlled. Gambling and television were seen to be similar.

> Seriously, what nonsense is talked about television. From the way people go on, you'd think it was a social disease. Some people won't even have a television set in their home for fear of being infected. Why not live dangerously? Watch *Coronation St.*[109]

A less placatory and altogether more thunderous contribution to the debate, with a savage attack on Bevins, came in an article in *The Times* several days later by Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, who had resigned from the Chairmanship of the ITA the previous October.

He foresaw saw a bleak future for ITV if the Government went ahead with its present policies.

> Faced with the competition of two integrated channels, and labouring under new disabilities, ITV will do well to attract 40% of the audience ... revenue will fall by 30% ... If costs in this high-cost industry rise more steeply than has been calculated – and this is my prediction – the total cost to the taxpayer or licence holder may reach £40M a year ... With all the peremptory claims now pressing on the Exchequer, can we afford all this merely to improve a television service with which the nation is, broadly, content?

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[107] *The Times*, February 27, 1963. Insiders would have been in no doubt that the letter could not have been written without the knowledge and consent of Sidney Bernstein himself. See John Finch (ed.) *Granada Television, The First Generation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) *passim.*

[108] From the Guild of Television Producers and Directors and the Association of Cinematograph and Television Technicians Producer/Directors' section. *The Times*, February 28 and March 1, 1963.

[109] *The Daily Telegraph*, March 12, 1963. It is interesting to compare this with Mark Jarvis' argument that the Government was demonstrating its liberalism on social issues by bracketing together gambling and commercial television. See pp. 42/43, above.

The rhetorical question required no answer.

> All the Postmaster General has done is to impose further disabilities on ITV. In particular, although he pays reluctant lip service to the importance of maintaining large programme companies in the interests of good television, he is in fact strongly prejudiced against them, and his proposals are designed to reduce the influence and output of the big companies. Their resources will shrink and there will thus be further fragmentation, with detriment to programmes ... the plan to charge the overburdened members of the Authority with detailed programming responsibilities is unrealistic, and seems designed to invest the ITA with the mantle of avuncular propriety now happily discarded by the BBC.

The reference was to the BBC satirical programme *That Was The Week That Was*, which was broadcast first in November 1962. It seems Kirkpatrick understood that a new clause was to be proposed in the Bill at Committee Stage which would remove the prohibition in the old Act of any 'offensive' representation of living public or private figures.

> There is however to be one significant relaxation. It is the fashion to bow down before satirical programmes; and the Postmaster General, ready, as always, to bend to the wind of change, is apparently prepared to allow the ITA to be offensive to living persons. This concession is symptomatic of the Government's timorous approach. They are in effect patting their child on the head and saying "You will run with the BBC. But you will wear army boots while they run in spikes." In this whole business the Postmaster General is thrashing about like a stranded porpoise on the beach.
>
> It is high time that political responsibility for broadcasting were (sic) transferred to a Cabinet Minister equipped to grasp the complicated issues.[110]

Neither Bernstein's charm nor Kirkpatrick's evident desire to wound had the desired effect. Certainly, no change in Government personnel or policy was to follow. This was not, of course, the first time that Kirkpatrick's notorious temper had become manifest, doing more to damage his cause than to promote it. As it was, Donald Chapman, a Labour MP who had fallen out with him in the past, was enabled to tell *The Times* the following day that this was 'the most offensive attack on a Minister I have ever read from a former public servant'.[111] It can be safely assumed that the net result was not to wound him but rather to increase sympathy and support for Bevins, among Conservative and Labour members, as well as, perhaps, the Prime Minister himself.

Macmillan, for whom broadcasting had never been high on the horizon, now certainly began to take an interest. Two days after Kirkpatrick's article appeared, he sent Bevins a note. He'd heard

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[110] *The Times*, March 21, 1963.

[111] *The Times*, March 22, 1963. It is possible that the Government's attention was distracted. On this day *The Times*' leading story was a call from Labour frontbencher George Wigg for a statement about rumours connecting an unnamed Minister with a missing call girl involved in a shooting in West London.

that the original estimate of how much the new tax would raise had been too high. Were the companies content? Were the figures of estimated revenue to be relied on? [112]

Bevins replied four days later. Most recent results did show that the companies' income was down, and their costs were up. But the estimate of revenue from the new tax was now - at £18 million - £10 million more than TAD. And he had lately agreed with Treasury Ministers 'a new scale which will tail off the yield more sharply if revenues continue to fall, but will bring in more if they revive'. The first £1.25 million would still be free of tax, which would be set at 22.5% for the next £8 million, and 40% on the rest. As to whether the companies were content, Bevins replied that he doubted whether the big companies ever would be. The medium ones were, and the small ones were pleased. Macmillan wrote 'agreed' on his copy of the note. [113]

April 3 was Budget Day. Between attending the opening of the Commons budget debate and a dinner at Buckingham Palace, Macmillan found time for a meeting with Renwick, ostensibly to discuss space communications. Renwick's letter thanking the Prime Minister for 'giving [him] so much time discussing Space' is in the file, along with a 'note' on Clause 7 he had 'promised' to send him. If the levy on turnover were imposed, ten of the fifteen ITV contractors, it declared, were faced 'with certain operating loss after 1964'. There would have to be 'wide scale redundancies'. A hundred thousand shareholders would see the value of their holdings 'slashed'. Exports will 'cease immediately'. Some Tories will vote on principle against 'a direct threat to a free enterprise industry', as will the Opposition, who are 'gravely concerned about unemployment'. But retaining the present 11% tax on advertising, with a new levy on profits, would 'reward the Treasury' without destroying the industry.[114] Macmillan altered the reply drafted for him from 'I am referring your note to my colleagues' to 'I will look into it myself'.[115]

In the same week, a memorandum prepared by a firm of accountants on the effects of the levy was distributed to Ministers, MPs and the press. The case it made was by now familiar to many. In summary, it insisted: 'In the result, the government could find themselves without a commercial television industry and without any revenue from it'.[116] Another letter was sent that week from ATV, this time from Norman Collins to Martin Redmayne. Its tone was ominous,

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[112] TNA: PREM 11/4648, note from PM to PMG, March 23, 1963.
[113] TNA: PREM 11/4648, note from PMG to PM, March 27, 1963.
[114] TNA: PREM 11/ 4648, letter and note from Sir R. Renwick, April 4, 1963.
[115] TNA: PREM 11/4648, letter from PM to Sir R. Renwick, April 5, 1963.
[116] TNA: PREM 11/4648, memorandum from Messrs. Binder, Hamlyn and Co., April 4, 1963.

warning of 'a number of Tories' preparing to vote against Clause 7 'on principle', with 'substantial' support from Labour.[117] Redmayne was clearly getting worried. He suggested a meeting of Ministers 'in order that the Government can be sure that it is not running into unnecessary trouble'. The word 'unnecessary' was thickly underlined in black ink.[118] Macmillan agreed. A meeting was called for April 19, to be chaired by the Prime Minister. But Bevins, supported by his civil servants, was standing his ground. In a note dated April 10, and another prepared for the meeting (both almost certainly, again, drafted by Wolstencroft), he issued a detailed defence of the new duty, insisting that his figures were right and those in the accountants' memorandum wrong. The ITV case was dismissed as 'much special pleading', with statistics that were 'demonstrably inaccurate and misleading'. For example, the levy would be charged on the same basis as TAD, that is, as before, it would not be payable on any discounts retained by the advertisers. The Post Office was certain that buyers would be prepared to go on paying at least the same amounts they were paying now for advertising time, whereas the companies' calculations assumed they would lose sums equivalent to the value of TAD.[119] The meeting agreed that the levy at the rates proposed 'could be justified' if the Government's estimates were

[117] TNA: PREM 11/4648, letter from Mr. Norman Collins, April 4, 1963.
[118] TNA: PREM 11/4648, note from Chief Whip to PM, April 8, 1963.
[119] TNA: PREM 11/4648, notes from PMG to PM, April 10 & April 18, 1963. The following figures are taken from the note dated April 18. The Government's figures for 1962/63 had originated in documents the companies had provided to the ITA. Estimates of revenue in 1963/64 came from the advertisers.

	Company estimates for 1962/63)	*Government estimates for 1962/63)*	*Government estimates for 1963/64*
Gross advertising receipts	£74.6m	£76.6m	£83.0m
After deducting commission	£58.9m	£65.1m	£70.5m
Costs	£36.9m	£43.1m	£46.6m
Profits before levy and tax	£22.0m	£30.2m	£32.2m
Profit after levy	£6.3m	£13.6m	£13.7m
Net profit available to shareholders	£2.9m	£6.5m	£6.5m

correct. Bevins was instructed to meet again with ITV representatives to see if the two sets of figures could be reconciled.[120]

Together with his officials, he met Sir Edwin Herbert of Associated Rediffusion and the accountants on April 23. According to him, Maudling was also present. Whether or not, it was in a triumphant note to Maudling sent that day that Bevins presented his account of the meeting. Herbert had indeed accepted, he said, that the companies had misrepresented the way in which the levy would be applied. Accordingly, they had over-estimated its effect by more than a million pounds. Also, the figures for income, costs and profits used by the companies for 1962/63 excluded more than two million pounds derived from programme sales, the *TV Times*, and other investments. The accountants had produced a misleading figure of £6.3 million for total profits before tax. Now, it could be agreed that it should have been more like £9.7 million.

And there was more. Herbert now accepted 'that he was expecting to recover at least some of the [around £8 million] TAD paid by advertisers'. That would bring the figure for pre-tax profits - at least - to the £13.6 million the Post Office had estimated.[121]

Maudling concurred. In a note to Macmillan. he added that he did not think it reasonable for the companies to exclude from their profit figures 'either what they earn from the *TV Times* or from the export of programmes ... these profits arise just as much from the special position they have been given as do their ordinary advertising revenues'. [122]

An official in Macmillan's Private Office wrote to confirm that the companies had agreed that 'in major particulars' the Government's figures were right. There was no need for a further meeting. 'Good' noted Macmillan.[123]

But the game was far from over. Herbert had also been talking to a significant ally in the Cabinet, Iain Macleod, and had given him to understand that the companies did *not* accept the Government's case. Macleod minuted Macmillan the day after Herbert's meeting with Bevins to say that the companies 'will no doubt soon return to the attack'. Clause 7 was to come before the

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[120] TNA: CAB 130/190, notes of meeting on April 19, 1963.
[121] TNA: PREM 11/4648, note from PMG to Chancellor of the Exchequer, April 23, 1963.
[122] TNA: PREM 11/4648. note from Chancellor of the Exchequer to PM. April 23. 1963.
[123] TNA: PREM 11/4648, note for PM, April 24, 1963.

Standing Committee the next day. Could Bevins not at least say that he would continue to receive, and consider sympathetically, representations on it from ITV? [124] There is no record of a reply. But there is evidence that Macmillan, or at least his Private Office, was tiring of the ITV campaign. Another letter was sent from ATV on April 24. This one was from Norman Collins, addressed to John Wyndham, Macmillan's Private Secretary for party work, who had worked closely with Collins on Tory election broadcasts in 1959. 'Things could scarcely look blacker', it declared. 'Even at this now eleventh hour Bob [Renwick] and I are wondering if it would be possible to postpone the financial clause ... it does look as though the Government will have a really large scale disaster on its hands'.[125] A laconic reply came from a junior official in Macmillan's office. He wrote: 'The Prime Minister understands that Sir Edwin Herbert has seen the Postmaster General, and as a result the television companies and the Government are a good deal closer to agreement about the facts and figures'.[126]

Some notes have survived in Bevins' handwriting for the speech he made at a meeting of the backbench broadcasting committee on April 24. He points out that the change in the basis of the levy from profits to turnover was not criticised when it was announced originally. In fact, he claims, it was not criticised in Parliament at all 'until some of the programme contractors mounted a campaign against it'. The notes go into some detail to make the case that his figures were right and those sent to MPs by the big four wrong. But he had not replied in public to the ITV claims as it was 'not in the Government's interests to have a public battle with the companies'. If ITV was to do less well than he had forecast, it would be possible to adjust the level of the duty. He was

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[124] TNA: T 319/476, note from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to PM, April 24, 1963. Oliver (Lord) Poole had telephoned Macmillan that day to tell him that Macleod's minute was on its way. As the Prime Minister was at Princess Alexandra's wedding, a message had been left, 'strongly hoping' that Macmillan would support Macleod. Poole declared his interest as, indirectly, a shareholder in ATV. But he added 'that, as Joint Chairman of the Conservative Party, he was concerned that the government, which had already appointed the hostile Mr. Carleton Greene as Head of the BBC should not also gratuitously antagonize the Independent Television Company (sic)'. (TNA: PREM 11/4648, note of telephone message from Lord Poole, April 24, 1963).

[125] TNA: PREM 11/4648, letter from Mr. Norman Collins, April 24, 1963. In 1960, more than a year after the General Election, Butler had written to Collins to thank him for his 'great help' with a Party Political Broadcast. 'It is really wonderful the way you give so much time and trouble and expert advice'. Letter dated 4 November 1960, Butler papers, RAB E13/3 46.

[126] TNA: PREM 11/4648, letter from P.J.Woodfield, April 25, 1963. The ITA was also still lobbying hard. On April 25, Sir John Carmichael wrote to the Private Office asking for a meeting with the Prime Minister for him to put its case. The ITA had already failed to persuade the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Littlewood had been asked for his opinion. He suggested that the PMG might be asked to point out to the PM 'that it is not altogether appropriate for the head of a public body to go on appealing over the head of the responsible and appointing Minister, namely the PMG. We have already allowed an 'appeal' to the Chief Secretary; now we have an appeal to the PM. Are the ITA contemplating a petition to Her Majesty?' The meeting seems not take to have taken place. TNA: T319/476, note from J. Littlewood, April 30, 1963.

'determined' to ensure the profitability of ITV. But he was 'equally determined to secure fair rentals for the taxpayer'. He would listen to 'well-founded' representations from the companies. But he was 'more concerned with the reputation of the Government than with special pleading'.[127]

With the notes, Bevins had kept a hand-written letter from his friend Henry Brooke, now Home Secretary, sent after the meeting. It read:

> Dear Reg
> You were damn good tonight (and so was Cyril). I deplore these bloody PRESSURE GROUPS within our own Party. They will KILL IT STONE DEAD yet.
> Keep it up! Good luck.
>
> Yours ever,
> Henry.[128]

The Standing Committee on the Television Bill, which had been sitting since early March, reached Clause 7 the following day. With Labour members generally supporting the Bill, there had so far been no divisions. Roy Mason, on the Labour front bench, described sceptically at a later session the propaganda with which his side had been 'swamped' from unions and others in the industry. It had insisted, with no persuasive success, that the Bill's effect would be 'catastrophic' in its effect on jobs .[129] Labour support for the Bill remained solid. Bevins was happy to refer to this 'quite unexpected convergence' between the two parties, which, he said, meant that, for the first time, ITV could count on the 'goodwill' of both sides of the House.[130] But, Labour members alleged, ITV sources were regularly briefing against the Bill, and were particularly close to a group of eight or nine Conservatives on the Committee - there with at least the acquiescence of the Government Whips - who were vehemently opposed to Clause 7. Numbers of them twice forced wrecking amendments to a vote, defeated with Labour help.[131] On April 29, Bevins remembered, he was called to a meeting with Maudling, Macleod and Redmayne at which he was again pressed to make concessions. He refused. Several dissident MPs 'trooped in' and threatened to vote against Clause 7. Redmayne, wrote Bevins, 'squirmed'. Left alone with the dissidents, and under pressure, Bevins promised he would think it over. 'This

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[127] I am grateful to Mr. Nicholas Bevins for allowing me to see this material and the letter below.
[128] Letter in collection of Mr. Nicholas Bevins. 'Cyril' was the MP Sir Cyril Osborne known for his campaigns against obscenity. He is referred to in BBC correspondence as being pro-BBC in 1962.
[129] *Report of House of Commons Standing Committee B, The Television Bill,* April 30, 1963, column 739/740.
[130] Ibid, column 815/816.
[131] Six members voted twice against the Government on Clause 7. They were Frederick Bishop, Geoffrey Hirst, David James, Sir Harmar Nichols, Captain L.P.S Orr, and Ernest Partridge. Bevins wrote of the latter that 'he looked at me [in the committee room] as though he could kill me'. Bevins, *The Greasy Pole*, p.104.

was dreadful', he wrote.[132] The following morning, he decided, still, to stand firm and not give way. Clause 7, unaltered, was eventually agreed without a division; the Opposition and loyalist Conservatives would, anyway, have ensured its passage. The Bill left the Standing Committee intact, after twenty-two sittings, on May 9.

The ITV lobby was still fiercely arguing its case. As was noted at the beginning of this section, ATV was now threatening to withdraw from the industry completely, and forecasting 'the end of ITV' if no concessions were made.[133] But their tactics were changing. This time the case was again being made for a second channel. Ahead of yet another meeting with the accountants, Maudling requested a brief from his officials.[134] Demonstrating characteristic, and not unjustified, convictions about the deviousness of ITV executives, Littlewood wrote that 'there may be a trap here'. If the government *did* agree to set an early date for a second ITA channel, the industry and 'the dissidents', as he called the pro-ITV Tories, would argue that the subsequent reduction in profits meant that the levy had become unrealistic, and that it should not be introduced until the new channel came into operation. And 'since [ITV] profitability may be expected to decline through a second commercial programme, the earlier the second channel is introduced, the more the Exchequer will lose'.[135] It was presumably also understood in the Treasury that once ITV regained its profitability, which in the long run it surely would, the battle for a levy on turnover would have to be fought all over again. In a note to the Chancellor, Bevins referred to a suggestion 'made at our meeting' (by whom is not clear - no record of that meeting seems to have survived) that, when the Bill returned to the House, he should then announce that the Government *would* authorise a second commercial channel to begin operations in 1965. Bevins wrote that he was sure that it would be wrong to make such a shift in government policy. It would be unwise politically since only a minority of Conservatives in the House and in the country supported it. It would be costly in revenue terms, since - if the levy were still in place - most estimates suggested that the expense of setting up a new service would mean that nothing would be left for the

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[132] Bevins, *The Greasy Pole*, p.105.

[133] The *Daily Telegraph*, May 21, 1963. See p. 188 above. The *Daily Express* was among those to respond sceptically to Collins, offering 'to put him out of his misery' by taking over the company. A Cummings cartoon featured ITV as an elephant, and the proposed tax as a puny mouse. 'Help - I'm being threatened' says the elephant (The *Daily Express*, May 22, 1963). The fears for ITV's financial future were to prove groundless, net advertising revenue at constant 1965 prices remaining at around or above £80 million for the years 1965-1969, dropping just below £80 million in the recession of 1970/71, and climbing steadily after that, well above the Government estimates made in 1961/2. Net profits *after* the levy, again at constant 1965 prices, were £17.1m. in 1965, £14.3m in 1966, £16.1m in 1967, and £14.2m in 1968 (Cmnd. 6753 (*The Annan Report*), p.180.

[134] TNA: T 319/478, note from Chancellor, May 16, 1963.

[135] TNA: T 319/478, note from J. Littlewood, May 17, 1963.

Exchequer - 'not even the equivalent of TAD'. The greatest danger', though 'was the clamour that would follow for the abolition of the levy on turnover'. That was 'the avowed objective of people like Norman Collins'. On the Bill's Report Stage, he was hoping to use 'language which, while offering encouragement to those who want a second programme, [did] not formally commit the Government to a particular time'. Copies of this note were being sent to Macleod and Redmayne.[136] Clearly, Bevins was gambling, and he was prepared to threaten his resignation.[137] He may very likely have calculated that for him either to resign or be sacked on this issue, on which he'd had support from Macmillan in particular and from others like Brooke, would have been seriously damaging.

But the pressure was, if anything, to increase. The Report Stage was postponed. Bevins grudgingly admitted that this was done, partly at least, for legitimate reasons.[138] He feared nonetheless that his opponents in the Government were planning for the Bill to be lost through shortage of parliamentary time. Meanwhile, the dissidents, and the ITV campaign, now enlisted heavyweight support from Selwyn Lloyd, who attended a meeting of the backbench broadcasting committee for the first time, where he dismayed Bevins by claiming that no serious attempt had been made to reconcile the figures disputed between the Government and ITV.[139] Lloyd returned for another well-attended meeting of the committee at the end of May, when, speaking first, he insisted that a decision must be taken immediately and announced publicly on the date for a second programme. Other senior backbenchers joined the known dissidents.[140] The chairman, who was now Robert Cooke, summed up the Committee's view, to which no opposition was minuted, that a date for a second ITV channel should be written into the Bill.

Before the Report stage could be taken, the House broke up for the two-week Whitsun recess. When it returned, the topic that obsessed it was the Profumo crisis. Although Macmillan was

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[136] TNA: T 319/478, note from PMG, May 21 1963. The stylistic evidence, again, suggests that this was drafted by Wolstencroft. Dennis Lawrence has said that Wolstencroft's personal dislike of Collins led him to block Collins' nomination for a knighthood (personal interview).

[137] He claimed that he did so later to Redmayne if the Cabinet were to withdraw its support. Redmayne, in this account, then backed down. Bevins, *The Greasy Pole*, p.110.

[138] Time had been found for a debate on a contentious decision by the Home Office to extradite Chief Enahoro, a Nigerian politician who had taken refuge in Britain. (Ibid, p.106).

[139] Ibid, p.106. Selwyn Lloyd's biographer writes that he had several meetings with Bevins around this time, advising him that 'safety lay in numbers [of television channels] as with newspapers', and 'pressing for expansion as quickly as possible'. D.R. Thorpe, *Selwyn Lloyd*, 1989, p.370.

[140] Among those speaking up for ITV2 were the previously loyalist Sir Tufton Beamish, Lord John Hope, and Sir Kenneth Pickthorne. CPA: CRD2/20/14, minutes of meeting May 28, 1963.

thought to have performed well in the debate on the Profumo affair on June 17, concern about the possible long-term damage that had been done consumed the Conservative Party to the exclusion of much else.[141] Redmayne was still, however, finding time to try to persuade Bevins to make concessions on his Bill to mollify the dissident Tories. According to Bevins, he was now joined in this by Butler. Bevins' attitude was that 'in view of the Government's weak position' over Profumo, he thought his was strong. He refused to budge.[142]

The Report Stage began in the House of Commons on June 24 when Bevins announced two concessions on the details of the levy, as agreed with Maudling. It would apply to net instead of gross receipts, and the shortfall would be made up by changes in the sliding scale: the 'free slice' would increase to be the first £1.5 million of advertising income, but the levy would be paid at 25% on the first £6 million and 45% on the rest. The effect would be to help the smaller and medium-sized companies while being relatively neutral for the big ones. He was expecting the duty to bring in around £17 million in a full year.[143]

It seemed almost irrelevant.

The following Thursday evening, when the debate on the clause was due to end, Roy Mason, for the Opposition, welcomed the changes, and sympathised with Bevins' 'suffering' at the hands of his own side. But he was now suspicious.

> I congratulate him for squeezing the big companies a little more ... but as we have had to wait seven weeks for this ... has he made a deal behind the scenes? Have those who pressed him had a quid pro quo in the form of the possibility of a second independent television channel? Is that why honourable Members opposite are now relatively quiet?[144]

The speech from John Rodgers that followed seemed to exclude that possibility. Rodgers, who declared his interest as Deputy Chairman of an advertising agency (it was in fact the British branch of J. Walter Thompson, the world's largest, and American-owned) proposed an amendment calling for a date to be fixed for a new ITA channel, no later than October 1965. He recalled his part in the struggles for the first Television Act.

> It is interesting to reflect that ten years ago in our first efforts to free television from paternal control, we had then the active support of many honourable Members who today make up the

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[141] Ramsden, *The Winds of Change*, pp.189-193.
[142] Bevins, *The Greasy Pole*, pp.109/110.
[143] *House of Commons Debates*, June 24, 1963, column 956.
[144] Ibid, June 27, 1963, column 968.

> present Cabinet. We saw our fight then together as a first step, but a first step only, in the battle for freedom of the air. [145]

ITV monopoly profits *should* be clawed back. But by competition.

> Why does my Right Honourable Friend not welcome this constructive, expansionist and conservative policy, and, instead, appear to cling to his destructive, dangerous and reactionary policy of trying to control profits by a bad form of taxation?[146]

Selwyn Lloyd spoke in support of the amendment. He had never had in mind that there should be a monopoly seller of advertising in any one area. The third channel should have been financed by advertising, in competition with the second. Now there should be a fourth channel, as soon as possible.[147]

According to Bevins, Macleod and Redmayne, sat next to him on the front bench, were 'openly applauding Rodgers' and Lloyd's speeches'.[148] In reply, Bevins was as conciliatory as he had promised to be. By 1965, it would be possible to assess a wide range of factors, including levels of advertising revenue, the influence of BBC2 and so on. *Then* he *hoped* to authorise a second ITA programme. Lloyd asked a direct question.

> Would my Right Honourable Friend just clear up this point? Is he saying that, despite his caveats, it is his hope and the hope of the Government to issue to ITA2 during 1965 a licence so that the second service will come on the air in 1966?

Bevins answered:

> That is perfectly correct.

He was, after all, only committing himself and the Government to a 'hope', although that was more than he had done before. It was, he wrote in his book 'a slight concession, but only slight'.[149] A former Labour Postmaster General, Will Williams, interjected.

> I couldn't help thinking what super-optimists the movers of the amendment are. They are talking about 1965 as if there will be a Tory government in power then. Everybody in the country knows that that will not be.[150]

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145 Ibid, column 1785.
146 Ibid, column 1786.
147 Ibid, columns 1796/97.
148 Bevins, *The Greasy Pole*, p.112.
149 Ibid, p.112.
150 *Debates*, June 24, 1963, columns 1814/15.

Rodgers ignored the interjection. It was as if he wanted to draw an *ideological* commitment from Bevins as much as anything that would affect what would actually happen in 1965. He returned to press the question, phrasing it this time in terms of the Government's *intentions*.

> Do the Government intend to produce a second channel - for independent television, I think - as soon as it can be made a success and in 1965?

On Bevins' answer, the future of the legislation seemed to depend. But there is now no certainty as to what that answer was. Bevins' book is deliberately obscure at this point. He makes no mention of Rodgers' question. Hansard recorded no audible answer from him. But it is clear that there was something in the nature of a gesture. Rodgers chose to put a positive interpretation on whatever gesture, body language or mime it was. He took it to mean 'yes'.

> If that is the Postmaster General's promise [said Rodgers, as recorded by Hansard], then I say that he is a man of honour and a man for whom I have great admiration, and, in the light of that promise, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.[151]

Bevins said nothing more.

The amendment was withdrawn. The absence of many Labour members who had left for the weekend early, as they often did on Thursdays, had made it possible that, put to a vote, the amendment would have passed.

According to Bevins, Redmayne came down to the bar to congratulate him after the debate.

> He said "they" were jubilant. "They think they've got what they asked for. No harm in letting them think it." Martin Redmayne was quite an operator.[152]

In fact the battle for the soul of British television in this parliament was over.[153] It had been won not by the populists but by the paternalists. And of course Will Williams was right about the next Government. Though, as it turned out, only just.

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[151] Ibid, column 1818.

[152] Bevins, *The Greasy Pole*, p.113.

[153] According to Bevins, he headed off any attempt by his opponents to reduce the scale of the levy in the House of Lords, by procuring a ruling that as a taxation matter this was something the Lords were unable to discuss. The Act received the Royal Assent on July 30. (Ibid, p.113).

Chapter Seven: **Pilkington Reassessed**

(i): **Pilkington and Social Change**

The Pilkington Report's influence has been considerable. It was produced at the start of a period of revolutionary change. Above all, this was a time when many women, many in the working class and many young people, were refusing to accept their place in a hierarchical society where much was governed by tradition. As David Cannadine has written, by the mid-1970s it was widely believed that, for better or for worse, dramatic changes had taken place.

> "The collapse of deference" was a phrase that seemed to be on everybody's lips, sometime with regret, often with relish. Either way, it seems clear that perceptions of Britain as a divinely ordained and successfully functioning hierarchy were much diminished.[1]

This, continued Cannadine, was a result of the loss of Empire, and the consequent 'undermining of the establishment'. There were several engines of change, not least scientific and technological advance, (as in the development of the contraceptive pill). But overwhelmingly the most important was the rapid growth in prosperity. For the first time ever to any great degree, the majority of British people were being liberated from the tyranny of a constant round of work and domestic routine. Many had leisure, and money to spend, and they could make choices about what to spend it on. They were becoming consumers.

However, as we have shown, when it came to making decisions about what should be on television, the bulk of the population was still going to have to defer to the tastes of the educated middle and upper class.

That the change in society was taking place was not always recognized at first. On the gala occasion marking the first break in the BBC's monopoly in 1955, Sir Kenneth Clark had spoken to five hundred or so dignitaries gathered in the Guildhall, and the still relatively small, and, as we have seen, relatively well-off audience watching on television. 'This' he said 'is a historic occasion'.

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[1] David Cannadine, *Class in Britain,*(London: Penguin, 1998), p.160.

> Here is a means of communication which enters the homes of millions of our countrymen, and has an unrivalled power to persuade ... it's a terrifying power for good or evil and hitherto it has been in the control of a single institution.

Now control of the medium was to be was shared with the ITV companies, and with the ITA. But:

> Free television, like a free Press, will not be controlled by any council or committee, but by two factors - the television companies' sense of responsibility and the fundamental good sense and right feeling of the British people.[2]

We have seen that Clark's faith in the companies' sense of responsibility did not long survive working with them. Equally, his faith in 'the fundamental good sense ... of the British people' may have been shortlived. The British people were not what they had previously been, or been taken to be. Seven years after Clark made his speech, and after seven years' experience of commercial television, Pilkington and the government response to it showed that élite groups could *not* trust the rest of the people to choose for themselves what to watch on television. Pilkington was commissioned because of the concerns of those who felt that 'free' television *had* to be controlled by councils and committees, and the Report contributed significantly to the consensus view held in government that such concerns needed to be enacted.

The 1963 Act, supported as we have seen by the Labour Party, also represented a victory for Conservatives like Johnson-Smith, quoted in the last chapter, over those who sought to apply market disciplines as widely as possible.[3] The civil war between the two camps in the Conservative Party continued until well into the 1990s. But if the Party had been returned to power in 1964, with Macmillan, Bevins and others gone [4], would Rodgers, Selwyn Lloyd [5] and the 'dissidents' have been able to enforce the promise they thought they had extracted from Bevins? Perhaps. But the Labour Government's 1966 White Paper made it clear that it, at any rate, did not consider another television service a high priority.[6] Most probably a Conservative government would have said the same. Sendall wrote that the companies, still continuing to grow and indeed to prosper in the mid to late 1960s, 'had learned to live with' the levy. But, especially

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[2] Tate Gallery Archives: Clark Papers/8812.2.2.1021, quoted in Weight, *Patriots*, p. 249. I am grateful to Dr. Weight for printing extracts from this speech, but he is most unlikely to be right in stating that 'millions' were watching.

[3] See pp. 190/191, above.

[4] Bevins lost Toxteth in the 1964 election. It remained a Labour seat until it disappeared in the 1983 redistribution of Liverpool constituencies. None of the successor seats have ever since elected a Conservative.

[5] Lloyd rejoined the Cabinet as Leader of the House of Commons later that year under Sir Alec Douglas-Home.

[6] Cmnd. 3169, *Broadcasting* (London: HMSO, 1966), para. 19.

in view of having to invest in new equipment for colour, none of them were now campaigning for a second channel.[7] Nor, bruised by the recession of the late 1960s and early 1970s, did they raise the issue during the Heath Government. From 1972, the advertising industry was offered new opportunities in commercial radio. A campaign began to introduce advertising on BBC television, and, under Margaret Thatcher, this became the preferred policy of pro-competition Conservatives for enforcing market disciplines on television. Thatcher was, however, to find in 1986 that a Committee of Inquiry under Professor Alan Peacock, a determinedly free-market economist, declined to recommend it.[8]

(ii): **Pilkington and Broadcasting**

The Pilkington Committee might have lost a battle on a terrain it had selected, the structure of ITV. But it - and others who sought to curb what they called ITV's excesses - had won the war for its soul. Within commercial television, there were more battles yet to be fought, especially over the operation of the levy, and programmes in the committees which determined programme policy. These continued to be dominated by the same kind of people as before: (and often the same people), bureaucrats, some more or less competent managers, some talented programme-makers, some visionaries. Few were wholly uninterested in making money. But many of the most significant policy decisions about what to put on commercial television were taken not by such committees, but by the respectable representatives of the middle and upper classes, doing their public duty on a public body. They continued to be appointed to the ITA and the IBA by Ministers and civil servants, and were largely altogether indistinguishable from their brothers, sisters and cousins on the BBC's Board of Governors. They included no-one who could be said to be working-class, nor any who saw themselves as directly representing working-class people. The idea of appointing any such person would have seemed preposterous. They did their best to keep standards on television high, according to their definition of high standards, and, as was shown in

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[7] Sendall, *ITV in Britain, Vol. 2*, pp. 335/336. In 1964, all the companies, including ATV, had reapplied for their licences, all successfully. Because of uncertainties about colour and allocation of wavebands, these were granted for three years only, later extended by one year. All, again, reapplied in 1967 for contracts for revised franchise areas which began in 1968. This time, several were unsuccessful. Ibid, Chapter 36, and Potter, *ITV in Britain,* vol. 3, chapter 1.

[8] Cmnd. 9824, para. 615. Its most radical suggestion was that the licence fee should be abolished and that the BBC should instead be financed by a complex system of subscription payments. That was rejected. One recommendation that was accepted was the end on Channel Four of the Pilkingtonian divide between the sellers of advertising (which had been the responsibility of the ITV companies) and the programme makers, leaving Channel Four to sell its own advertising from 1991 onwards.

Chapter One, turned ITV into a channel whose programmes were practically indistinguishable from those on BBC1.

Many in the educated classes - certainly on the left - were active in campaigns in the 1960s and 1970s against censorship in areas like films, theatre and print. But, they argued, the freedom of expression they were demanding for artists in those areas could only be guaranteed in television, along with freedom of choice for the viewer, if the industry were closely regulated, as Pilkington had insisted, in the public interest.

Were they justified?

Pilkington's central argument was that the interests of advertisers on advertising-funded channels would always work against the possibility of producing 'good' programmes. Richard Hoggart has continued to make this case, most recently in a book published in 2004. The advertisers' almost constant need for the largest possible audience, he has argued:

> more and more determines that populist programming wins, programmes which do not disturb or suggest wider horizons, which offer instant and repetitive gratifications, whose world is, except intermittently, closed to other considerations.[9]

He also quotes approvingly Huw Wheldon's well-remembered aphorism about public service broadcasting: that it exists 'to make good programmes popular, and popular programmes good'.

> By 'good' programmes he meant those made because the broadcaster thought them, though perhaps 'difficult', of great value and wished without 'selling them' by over simplification to make them widely available. By popular programmes he meant those unlikely to appeal to and not designed specifically for a highly educated audience but which became 'good' because they too did not sell out by patronising, or secretly despising, their audience's taste, by talking down to them.[10]

In other words, it was the programme-makers themselves who determined whether their programmes were 'good' or not.

In Hoggart's 1973 article on 'The difficulties of democratic debate', the reaction of the critics was not seen to be based on honest disagreement about how it was possible to assess the 'good'-ness of a programme, or on how media freedom could operate in a democracy. It was the consequence of

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[9] Richard Hoggart, *Mass Media in a Mass Society*, (London: Continuum, 2004), p.112.

[10] Hoggart, *Mass Media*, p.116. Huw Wheldon, both schoolmasterish and military in manner, was a former presenter of children's' and arts programmes, who was, first, Controller, then Managing Director of BBC Television from 1965-1975.

a 'fundamental unwillingness to rethink in the way Pilkington had tried'. It was demonstrated, he claimed, in what he called 'the-proof-of-the-pudding' argument. A critic might say the following, he thought:

> 'After all, people watch the commercial channel more than they watch BBC, and therefore it must be for them the better channel. The proof of the pudding. . .You and I may think that some things are better than others, but wouldn't it be undemocratic to try to force these things down people's throats, etc. etc'. Not that the Report had suggested any forcing.[11]

Because Hoggart and the Report claimed that they did not draw a distinction between 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow' programmes, they could not be found guilty of this particular charge.

> [The Report] got away...from the old distinction which puts serious = highbrow = good in one box, and light = lowbrow = bad in another.

Why then, it might be asked, had it published a breakdown of 'serious' programmes, and approved the BBC for having shown more of them in peak-time? The question was not addressed.

> The Report said, of course, that light and serious programmes each had their place, that goodness or badness was not a matter of height of brow but had to do with the quality of the imagination and the response to life in any work, whatever its mood. It attacked ...'triviality'.[12]

As defined in its own special way.

But who was to determine 'the quality of the imagination' in any particular programme? Or its 'response to life'? What criteria were to be used other than those honed by life-long 'highbrows' in the course of successful 'highbrow' careers? The dilemma can be illustrated by three examples. First, when a contestant on *Take Your Pick* has to decide between, on the one hand, taking ten crisp new white five-pound notes imploringly held out at her, and, on the other, making a guess that could give her even more money, or leave her exiting the studio with only a clothes-peg, who is to say that 'life' is not being responded to in all its painful randomness? Secondly, when a honeymoon couple on *Beat the Clock* can win a pressure-cooker by dressing up in silly clothes and playing a childish game, is there not a lesson for life in witnessing the love between them - and the compassion of she who is good at the game for he who is not? Or, as may equally well be the case, her intense irritation at his clumsiness? And even if we don't agree, and would choose not to watch such programmes, calling them 'vapid' and 'puerile', others might make a point of choosing to watch them, and not only when they were half-asleep, and actually positively enjoy them.

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[11] Hoggart, 'The difficulties of democratic debate, p.191.
[12] Ibid, p.192.

Finally, a car is pushed into a service-station out of sight of the attendant. When the attendant appears, the driver asks him, please, to look under the bonnet as something seems to him to be not quite right. When the attendant opens the bonnet, there is no engine. Is that episode in *Candid Camera* not brilliantly imaginative?[13] Is the care with which the attendant tries to explain what the problem is to the driver without upsetting or insulting him not a paradigm of the human condition? Is it not a profound 'response to life'?

These, of course, are all examples of programmes to which Hoggart and others objected.[14]

Despite the claims of some post-modernists, all judgements are *not* of equal worth and validity. Some will always be more soundly based and better argued than others. The evidence for a judgement has to be given, and a case has to be made, and has to be capable of being rationally and logically defended. It is not adequate to say that a television programme is 'good' because it was concerned with something the producer thought had 'great' value, or because of the 'quality' of the imagination at work in it, or, despite the last example above, because of its 'response to life'. All that is happening in these cases is that synonyms are being offered for 'good'. There is certainly a question whether judgements about what is 'best' can be offered as universals in ordinary discourse, and thereby legitimately form the basis of public policy. An edition of *Hancock's Half-Hour*, for example, may well *now* be thought to be much 'better' than many a *Monitor*, and certainly than a *Gallery*. Tony Hancock's memory is revered; Jimmy Edwards, star of the series set in the fictional Chiselbury School, with whom it may be recalled Macmillan's speechwriter bracketed him, is nearly forgotten.[15] The 'best' may be more difficult to establish, and harder to recognise, than is sometimes thought; that it even exists may be a notion more difficult to defend than many writers seem to realise.

A judgement as to whether a programme is 'good' or not, or 'trivial' or not, will always depend on who is making that judgement. The unspoken assumption that is present on practically every page of the Report and in every work by Hoggart defending it is that there are some people - such as, perhaps, the members of the Pilkington Committee - who are automatically better qualified than

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[13] The present writer actually worked on an episode of *Candid Camera* in the 1960s in which the stunt described was performed. Regrettably, the credit for devising and staging it was not his.
[14] It may be recalled that Francis Newark admitted to enjoying *Candid Camera*. See page 82 above.
[15] He was the defeated Conservative candidate in North Paddington in 1964, having regularly been invited to address the Conservative backbench committee on broadcasting on 'the performer's point of view' during the previous years.

others to make those judgements. As when they decided in their consideration of quiz programmes - in Joyce Grenfell's words - that 'the prizes should be trivial but the programmes shouldn't'.[16] What about those people who liked quiz programmes the way they were, who *wanted* the questions to be funny and 'trivial', and the prizes as big as they could be? Were these people not as entitled as anyone else to take part in Hoggart's democratic debate? As has been noted, such programmes were not available to be watched in the decades after 1968. There was little debate over whether there was a place for such 'triviality' on television. Nor about whether those who objected to them should have the right to deny them to those who *did* want them. Both debates should surely have been encouraged by democrats. It was to Pilkington's discredit - and indeed it is part of the historical significance of Pilkington - that they did not.

(iii): **The long-term legacy: achieving quality and stifling debate**

Defenders of what is called public service broadcasting have referred to the 'missionary' approach of the BBC, which, according to Michael Tracey, broadcasters like Hugh Greene 'democratised' and 'humanised'. In a speech in 1961, Greene drew on the writings of the Victorian critic Matthew Arnold to describe the role of the BBC as being to ensure that 'the best knowledge', 'the best ideas' and 'the best thought' were carried 'from one end of society to another'. This true source of 'sweetness and light' was to be brought to a people, in Michael Tracey's words, 'not because they needed it but because they in effect wanted it without quite having so realised'.[17] Tracey also insisted that the 'best' programmes, as Greene understood the term in the 1960s (and Tracey also nearly forty years later) were not necessarily 'high-brow' programmes. Nor were they programmes which were 'worthy', that is 'reflective of the values of a middle class which despises popular culture and lauds its own'.

> The idea [according to Tracey] which emerged in the BBC during [the late fifties and early sixties] was that one could take popular culture - for example, drama or comedy - and do it in such a way, with such intelligence, professionalism and sheer *élan* - that it rose from the mediocre and took its audience with it.[18]

In this kind of argument, there is rarely any mention of the Hollywood film industry which, for decades, and motivated only for profit, had been producing works which are believed to be

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[16] See p. 107 above.
[17] Tracey, *Decline and Fall of Public Service Broadcasting*, p. 92, quoting Hugh Greene, 'Adult Education and the Common Good', speech to the National Institute of Adult Education Annual Conference, 22 September 1961
[18] Ibid, p. 95.

among the most arresting and profound, and funniest, of their time. Chaplin, Keaton and the Marx brothers on the one hand and Howard Hawks and John Ford on the other hardly needed to wait for the idea to 'emerge' in the BBC that popular comedy or drama could be produced which 'rose from the mediocre'. Equally, profit-oriented American television has regularly made comedy programmes which are widely agreed not to be mediocre, from *The Phil Silvers Show* to *Curb Your Enthusiasm,* and, similarly, justly-praised dramas such as *The Sopranos* and *Six Feet Under.*[19]

Frequently, advocates of the missionary position find themselves in difficulty defending the disproportionate share of resources spent on those programmes which *are* thought to be 'worthy'. Figures produced by the BBC in 1961 for the Pilkington Committee showed unsurprisingly that popular music programmes on radio - such as *Two-Way Family Favourites,* with an audience of more than fifteen million people - were costing as little as four (old) pence per thousand viewers per hour (less than 2 new pence) while the cost of a Haydn oratorio transmitted on the Third Programme to (an alleged) twenty-five thousand people was more than £55 per thousand listeners per hour, more by a factor of over two thousand, two hundred than the figure for *Family Favourites.*[20] While it was happy to provide these figures privately to Pilkington, the BBC would not allow them to be published. Its Secretary reported that he explained the policy in a phone conversation with a Pilkington staff member (in the course of discussions as to which BBC submissions might be made public):

> (a) that as regards both the actual costs of separate productions and also the estimated size of the audience for individual broadcasts, it was not our policy to publish

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[19] In his recent book Hoggart admits that American television produces some 'splendid' programmes. He instances *The Simpsons* and *The Sopranos*. These, he says, are just 'fine flowers in the dust-heap'. But what fine flowers! (Hoggart, *Mass Media,* p.113). It is notable that in the work of the founders of the Frankfurt School, Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, which was referred to in Chapter One, there are frequent scattered references to such contemporary figures as Welles, Lubitsch and Darryl Zanuck; to Greer Garson and Bette Davis; to Guy Lombardo and Benny Goodman; to Chaplin, Donald Duck and Betty Boop. Adorno and Horkheimer obviously spent more time in New York and Los Angeles movie theatres than would have been strictly necessary for their research. Adorno and Horkheimer, 'Dialectic of enlightenment', pp. 126-147.

[20] BBC WAC: R4/39/9, 'Submission on the Cost of Programmes Relating to their Audience' July 10, 1961. Radio audiences below 25,000 could not be measured. The BBC told Pilkington that the cost per hour per thousand was therefore estimated as if the audience was 25,000. The highest-rating BBC Television programme in the week chosen was *The Black and White Minstrel Show,* with an audience of nearly fifteen million, costing 15s/10d (approx.76p) per thousand viewers per hour. The television programme with the lowest rating given was *Seeing and Believing,* a religious talk, which (presumably costing very little) was watched, it was claimed, by fifty thousand people (the true figure was probably smaller) at a cost of £7/8s/10d per thousand viewers (approx. £7.43).

information on those lines, (b) we felt that the information might be of advantage to our competitors, and (c) that it would arouse questions from the unions and from pressure groups of various kinds to which we would not wish to be exposed.[21]

Evidently there was much nervousness about having publicly to defend figures like the above, and the similar, if less strikingly disparate, figures provided for television programmes.

But, of course, some programmes necessarily cost more than others, and they would mostly be expensively mounted dramas and documentaries as well as oratorio and opera, the kind of programmes designed to please the better educated section of the BBC's audience. And many of those, judged by the harshest standards, would have been found to be extremely 'good'. Despite the weaknesses in the paternalists' arguments, with their unmistakeable flavour of special pleading, the reality is that the duopoly which prevailed in British television under paternalist control following Pilkington and the 1963 Act produced very many very 'good' programmes, some expensively-made with predictably low audiences, which would have made them very hard to justify under a regime determined to maximise audiences at all times.

A well-grounded judgement was made in 1985 that 'the general level of British television across the entire spectrum has not been matched'. This came from the critic Christopher Dunkley, whose enthusiasm for the duopoly we noted in the opening chapter, along with his conviction that British television was 'a worldbeater'. This was not, he wrote, just 'empty chauvinism'. He instanced the success of British television programmes in international festivals. In particular he cited the *Prix Italia*, whose integrity and prestige were widely recognized. Of the three prizes awarded in 1984, one each for drama, documentary and music, two went to Britain against world-class competition, one to Central Television (which basically was ATV under a new name) and one to Channel Four.[22] No other country had ever won two of the three awards. Britain had done it 'several' times', and once, in 1978, had won all three awards, two going to the BBC, and one to ITV.[23] Dunkley also cited the International Emmy awards given by America's National Academy

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[21] BBC WAC: R4/39/18, 'Report of a Telephone Conversation between M.G. Farquharson, Secretary of the BBC, and Miss S. Fisher, Assistant Secretary to the Broadcasting Committee', March 12, 1962.

[22] They were *Made in Britain,* a violent account of skinhead behaviour, and Peter Brook's production of the opera *Carmen.*

[23] They were the drama *The Spongers* and the documentary *Hospital* (both BBC), and the music programme *Macmillan's Mayerling* (ITV). Dunkley gives a league table of *Prix Italia* prizewinners between 1957, when the first television prizes were awarded, and 1984. Britain:26, France:9, Sweden:9, Japan:7, W. Germany:5, Italy:4, USA:4, Czechoslovakia:4, Poland:2, Switzerland:2,

of Television Arts and Sciences in 1984. All five winning programmes - out of 144 entries from 25 countries - were produced by ITV and Channel Four.[24]

To many, it seemed as if the insistence that broadcasting organizations should not compete for finance, which derived from the Pilkingtonian belief that the influence of advertisers needed to be minimised, had guaranteed that Britain could enjoy the best television in the world. But the programmes which won prizes were rarely those which were most popular with audiences, which continued to prefer triviality to seriousness. In the 1970s, it was harder for them to find all the triviality they liked on ITV. Pressure from the now more powerful Authority meant that the proportion of 'serious' programmes in peak-time rose at the expense of light entertainment, by up to fifty per cent, according to one estimate for Thames Television, which now operated the London franchise. Meanwhile, the BBC had transferred much of its more serious programming to BBC2. Partly as a result, ITV's share of Top Ten programmes fell from 58% in 1972 to 25% in 1976.[25]

A decade later, when Dunkley was celebrating British international triumphs, the Peacock Report gave a very different picture, arguing that 'the award of professional accolades ... can only be at most an indirect guide to what will promote the interests of those for whom the system is ultimately designed'. It reported a speech made by the Director of the National Consumer Council, at a conference Peacock had organized in 1985 on viewers' perceptions of television. Having noted that 'when some broadcasters talk about good programmes they mean programmes which win prizes awarded by other broadcasters', he gave figures of a MORI survey carried out for the Council earlier that year. It would not be wise, he insisted, to assume that consumers thought that everything was wonderful in the world of British broadcasting.

> 46% of television viewers said that they were very or fairly satisfied with the quality of television, against 45% who were very or fairly dissatisfied, and he added 'all our experience of measuring consumers' attitudes show that you can normally expect about 75-80% to say that they are satisfied with a service, whatever it is. 46% is a very low figure'.[26]

Belgium:1,Denmark:1, Holland:1, Finland:1. He points out that many countries, such as Austria, Greece, Hungary, Norway, Russia and Spain, had entered regularly but won no prizes at all.

[24] They included *Carmen*, the drama serial *The Jewel in the Crown, The Heart of the Dragon* (a Channel Four documentary series on China), *Fresh Fields* (a middle-class family-set situation comedy) and an adaptation of *The Wind in the Willows.* (Dunkley, *Television Today and Tomorrow*, pp. 84-86).

[25] Potter, *ITV in Britain, Vol 4*, p. 227.

[26] Speech by Mr. Jeremy Mitchell, November 28, 1985, quoted in the Peacock Report, Cmnd. 9824, Para. 198.

No further details of the survey were given. But it is reasonable to suppose that many of those very or fairly dissatisfied consumers were *not* clamouring for more award-winning serious programmes.[27] It is notable that, as may be recalled from Chapter Three, the *Sunday Times* found in 1962 that 60% of the television audience thought that programmes - on only two channels, half those available in 1985 - were 'satisfactory' or better.[28]

But there was one area where the authorities had found themselves obliged to give in to popular taste. That was in radio. Pilkington had paid little attention to the campaigns for commercial radio, nor had the Government in its White Papers or its Act. But the demand for more pop music on radio was irrepressible, and, unlike in television, enterprising businessmen could meet it. In 1964 Radio Caroline came on the air, broadcasting non-stop pop music to Britain from a ship moored just outside territorial waters in the North Sea. Within a month, the BBC's Lance Thirkell, who lived near the coast, was complaining that 'most of our part of Suffolk is listening to Radio Caroline and, I am sorry to say, comparing it favourably with our own output'.[29] Audiences for Caroline and several other pirate radio stations quickly reached two million. Here was an audience of young people who were, in the spirit of the time, *not* prepared to defer to those who thought they should have something better to do than to listen to pop music. By 1967, the Labour Government had passed legislation designed to prohibit the pirate operations. But only after the BBC had been forced to create Radio One to transmit the non-stop pop music for which the demand had been proved.[30] Legal land-based pop radio stations - and some terrestrial pirates - replaced the ships after 1972. Happily for the broadcasting authorities, pirate television ships were a technical impossibility.

There were a very few similar pop music radio programmes broadcast on the BBC before 1967. One final quotation from Richard Hoggart, who had been listening to them, demonstrates the divide between the Pilkingtonian few who deplored such programmes and the large numbers who

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[27] Data which show that 'the main reason most viewers watch television [is] to be entertained by programmes that [are] not intellectually challenging' has most recently been gathered by Jack Williams. See Williams, *Entertaining the Nation: A Social History of British Television* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004), pp.25/26.

[28] See p. 93 above.

[29] Lance Thirkell to Frank Gillard, April 20, 1964, quoted in Briggs, *History*, vol. 5, p.512. Briggs points out that, at this time, the BBC's output of popular music was mostly confined to programmes like *Family Favourites* and *Housewives' Choice*.

[30] Radios Three, Four, and Five continue on the BBC alongside Radios One and Two, their relatively low costs enabling the BBC in this case to disprove, for the time being, any élitist fears that bad must drive out good. The benefits of cross-subsidisation from the licence-fee might, however, not long survive any future campaign to abolish it.

did, and do, actually like them. This is from the sole paragraph on broadcasting in *The Uses of Literacy* written in the mid-1950s.

> There is the lowbrow-gang-spirit of some gramophone-record features in which young men, accompanying their items with a stream of pally patter, offer programmes whose whole composition assumes that whatever the greatest number like most is best and the rest are the aberrations of 'eggheads'. Always the apologists for these programmes make the usual defence - that they are 'in good taste - homely - full of the pathos and joy of ordinary lives'; and that they are also, 'new - arresting - startling - sensational - full of gusto - and handsomely endowed with prizes'.[31]

What is most striking about this passage is the misanthropic lack of sympathy it betrays for people who like pop music. For most people, in other words.

The significance of Pilkington is, partly, that it marked a fruitful and successful alliance between conservatives, with more or less reactionary social attitudes, and intellectuals on the left, hostile both to capitalism and to popular taste. Both groups held strongly anti-democratic views, fearful of the judgements and desires of 'the greatest number'. The impact of this alliance was remarkably long-lived. It ensured that the BBC would remain the dominant force in British broadcasting, and that ITV would become respectable. For much longer than could have been anticipated, British television remained a haven for numbers of talented and creative individuals - as well as many who were neither - in which they could make the programmes they wanted and seek the esteem of their colleagues. If the result was to produce a television service that regularly offered items of very high quality standing out from the mediocrity and the dross that formed much of it, it was at the cost of failing to give a large part of the audience what it wanted, treating it at times with an attitude that amounted almost to contempt. Those alienated viewers, mostly in the working-class - so it could be argued - became a substantial part of the readership of the *Sun,* subscribers to Sky Television, and voters for Margaret Thatcher. In September 2004, of the nearly twenty-five million homes in Britain with television sets, nearly fourteen million had chosen to pay large annual sums for access to mostly minimally-regulated satellite or cable channels. Of these homes, more than 44% of their viewing was on such channels. [32] The revolt against enforced deference, when it came, was ferocious in its intensity, and comprehensive in its effects. It is not yet over.

[31] Hoggart, *Uses of Literacy*, p.282.
[32] Figures from www.barb.co.uk.

Appendix A.

Extract from Granada Television Oral Evidence, April 28, 1961.

(TNA: HO244/40.)

Representing Granada: Sidney Bernstein, Cecil Bernstein, Denis Forman, Victor Peers, Joseph Warton (members of the Management Board).

Sir Harry Pilkington (Chairman):
In your written submission, you say that the first charge to your company is your responsibility to the public and your duty is to provide in films and television the very best in every type of show, irrespective of immediate profit, and later on you do say that the criterion of best cannot simply be taken from TAM ratings. How do you really try and assess it? With whom, if you like, does the responsibility lie for interpreting that philosophy?
Mr. Sidney Bernstein:
With us - the five people you see here today. After all, sooner or later, whose taste do you rely upon? We go round the office. We say we're providing programmes for who in this sort of enormous public? Our family, our friends and the people we know. Sooner or later in anything to do with show business, anything to do with the public, theatre or films, you have to rely on your own taste. If you fail, then you fail. If you succeed you succeed because it's something you wanted to do.
Chairman:
You're relying on your own taste and judgement in supplying what is acceptable to you, or are you thinking of an audience of a somewhat similar type?
Bernstein:
I think that we have to have both. The point is this: we would not worry about the lowest common denominator. Quite obviously, if we put on a certain kind of X films, we would probably make quite a lot of money for a very short time, but we believe it would be bad business in the long run, and in addition we wouldn't want to do it.
Chairman:
I wonder if for such an enormous mixture as the public is whether you have any particular typical picture? If one is going to a Speech Day at a school one is sometimes told the form to aim at is the Fifth; the Sixth Form will be analysing it, and the bottom two forms will not be listening because they are too small, and if you aim at the Fifth you will be hitting the target for them. Have you any sort of general target for which you are aiming at all?
Bernstein:
Yes, but our targets vary during the course of the day.
Chairman:
I was going to ask about that too.
Bernstein:
We have the different groups. There's the tired businessman who comes home; the man who's not tired; the man who's had his dinner, and the man who's not had his dinner. That needs variation. We hope we do a variety of programmes. What we like to think is that we do the best in each particular field. We're not ashamed of *The Army Game*,[1] but at the same time we do different programmes for each calibre. We're not ashamed of them either. For each particular class, we try to do the best we can do with the amount of talent available to us.
Chairman:
In your submission, you stress the importance of not talking to people in terms they don't understand. I take it that another way of putting that is that on the one hand you mustn't just give people what you think is good for them?

[1] A popular long-running comedy series, often accused of vulgarity.

Bernstein:
That would be impertinent.
Chairman:
Which is one extreme, and on the other hand, that simply to give people what they might be thought to want would be the other extreme?
Bernstein:
Yes.
Chairman:
Am I right in judging that you feel that somewhere between those two extremes must lie your responsibility?
Bernstein:
Exactly.
Chairman:
But you probably wouldn't like to define it much more closely than that?
Bernstein:
Let's go round the table. Denis, how would you define it?
Denis Forman:
I'd say that there are a number of things that each of us may enjoy individually which are too private an enjoyment for the mass public. Someone may be interested in chamber music or chess. Neither of those it is reasonable to put on television because you're going to bore more people than you entertain. Going to the other end of the scale, as soon as you begin to feel a piece of entertainment is slightly dissatisfactory to you the, you shouldn't put that piece of entertainment on. If you're perfectly happy with it, and like it, and if you feel it's not too specialised, you're not imposing your own tastes. I should say the area between those two is the area where it's safe to put shows on.
Chairman:
Would you feel *The Army Game* does that, get anywhere being one that you do not feel very enthusiastic about?
Forman:
No, I like *The Army Game* very much. It has its bad periods. It has its bad shows, and you feel bad about bad shows, but at its best, I'm a great fan of *The Army Game.*
Chairman:
I'm assuming that you don't like nearly as much the shows that originate with AR or ATV[2], or some of these?
Forman:
No, you have to be fair.
Chairman:
No need to be here.
Forman:
Naturally you start with a prejudice for your own programmes, but there are some things the other Companies do that we're the first to recognise they do very well indeed. We wouldn't claim any monopoly in excellence at all.
Cecil Bernstein:
I'm a great fan of Arthur Haynes.[3]
Forman:
So am I
...
Richard Hoggart:
We accept *The Army Game*, we like it very much. We also like *What the Papers Say.* We do not like the quiz shows, they are a different kind of thing, they are pandering to the need for quick money, having people up to produce the astounding fact that Cleopatra's needle is on the Embankment and being told they are terribly clever and here is a refrigerator. How do you stand in that sort of argument?
Bernstein:
Are we in favour of quiz shows?

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[2] The reference is to much-criticised programmes like *Double Your Money* and *Beat the Clock.*
[3] A popular comedian, now forgotten.

Hoggart:
I suppose you are, but I would like you to defend them as well as you can.

Bernstein:
We have put on a few quiz shows, and some of them have ended rather disastrously for us. We had one called *Twenty-One* which achieved a certain amount of notoriety where people had to have intelligence to answer questions. We have one on now, *Criss Cross Quiz*, where people have to have a certain general intelligence. I find that members of my family, normal decent people, rather like Criss Cross Quiz. They can play the game at the same time just to see if they know the answers. Some quiz games appeal to the lowest common denominator of popular entertainment. I think they have their place in the overall, roughly 100-odd hours a week that is being done by the BBC and ITA.
Hoggart:
What sort of place is it? Suppose such a person might say there's always somebody who would enjoy Criss Cross Quiz. You'd still be faced with the argument that there are certain things we find, these aren't some things I should encourage in myself.
Bernstein:
I get bogged down with the word encourage. We think quiz games have a place in television programmes. I won't say all the quiz games that are done are ideal ones. No doubt they get better over the years. I think there's a place for them. There are crossword puzzles in the Times, and when I was young there were all sorts of quiz games around, if you sent the coupon you got a rabbit if you got the right answer. It's a traditional thing. It just has its place and it's a question in some way, I presume, which reflects the taste of the day.
Hoggart:
Then you would put your argument on a straight reflection of the composition of the audience rather than any question of decision by you?
Bernstein:
Not the ones we put on. We would think the ones we put on, *Criss Cross Quiz* and *Junior Criss Cross Quiz*, are quite successful intelligent games and have their place on television.
Hoggart:
What about the size of prizes?
Victor Peers:
They're not large, they're limited.
Chairman:
The question of small or large is not whether they're small or large to the coffers of Granada, but small or large to the pocket of the recipient, of course.
Peers:
Yes.
Chairman:
But in those terms, what is the top prize?
Peers:
It depends on the skill of the competitor and how successful he is at the game, but the maximum that can ever be won is £1000, and that I think has been won twice.
Elizabeth Whitley:
On the Junior?
Peers:
No, that's limited to a points system. A bicycle is about the maximum prize that a boy can win. [4]

[4] Following this, the issues over quiz games were not raised again by the Committee.

Appendix B

Paper by Dennis Lawrence, (presented to the Pilkington Committee as BC/Sec/32, dated October 1960, filed as TNA: HO 244/4.)

How far should broadcasting authorities assume responsibility for the cultural standards of the community?

1. The phrase 'the cultural standards of the community' is not used here in the narrow sense which defines culture as the conscious improvement of mind through practice in the more demanding intellectual and aesthetic exercises. It relates rather to that comprehensive range of taste and interests and of social and moral attitudes in the community which represents its general disposition and character.

2. Before tackling the question we must dispose of a preliminary one: does broadcasting have a significant effect on the cultural standards of the community? if the answer were 'no', there would be little practical need to pursue the question of responsibility. That this is so is sometimes said or implied. Critics of programme content are, it is suggested, too sensitive, and viewers are not nearly so susceptible as is sometimes supposed. The suggestion is that the effect of broadcasting on cultural standards is negligible.

3. There is, however, little certain knowledge on the effects of broadcasting. The strict answer to our preliminary question is not: 'no'. It is: 'we do not know'.

4. If there is no certain knowledge, there has to be a presumption one way or the other. This must be that broadcasting, and especially television - pervasive, capable of dramatic, vivid and reiterated orientation to people in their own homes, transient and, therefore, hard to analyse and criticise - has a unique power to influence and persuade. Certainly, many advertisers believe this. We must reckon, therefore, with a probability so strong as to amount to a certainty that broadcasting will affect cultural standards; and that, if the medium is abused, there is a risk that the effect will be bad or even disastrous. There is this consideration, too. A large body of reputable opinion is convinced, although it cannot prove, that television is affecting cultural standards; and that the effect is too often regrettable.

5. So we cannot say that there is no effect on cultural standards; nor does it follow that, because we cannot certainly show what, if any, effect there is the broadcasting authorities need not concern themselves about it. If they need not, it is not for this but for another reason. This brings us back to the main question.

6. It may be advanced as another such reason that, even if broadcasting did affect cultural standards, it would be wrong for the broadcasting authorities to assume responsibility for them; wrong because it would amount to paternalism, and paternalism - no matter how little and how beneficial - is anathema in a free society. No-one has so far expressly stated this view in written evidence[5]; but it seems sometimes to be implied; it is often stated in the Press; and it has been advocated by prospective witnesses in the past, under such slogans as: "Broadcasting should give the public what it wants, and not what someone thinks is good for the public". This argument invites us to believe that the issue is democracy versus paternalism, or the free society freely choosing versus the directed society having what it is given. It is, of course, an extreme view. The opposing extreme is, presumably, that the expert, moved by a high sense of duty, knows what the public need; and that it is, therefore, unnecessary and even wrong for him to consider what the public

[5] Hardly any written evidence had been received by the Committee by the time this was written.

want. No-one has advanced this point of view in written evidence or elsewhere. These, then, are the two extremes: it is possible to hold either as article of doctrine and so to insist that that they are irreconcilable. It is also possible to believe that the issue is not one of either-or principle, but one of degree.

7. This last possibility is, of course, inherently more likely to be true that either of the extremes of doctrine; and a closer look at the extremes bears it out.

8. First, complete paternalism: No-one advocates it; and no-one alleges that anything remotely resembling it is practised. What those to whom any suggestion of it is anathema can say is this: that to the extent to which programmes contain material which is not "what the public wants" or "what the public have chosen" there is paternalism, and it is wrong. What they cannot say is that there is too much of it; for this would reduce the difference to one of degree and admit the prospect of reconciliation. If, however, they insist that no lead or prompting whatsoever by the broadcasting authorities is permissible, they must, if they are consistent, deny that a responsibility for the effect on cultural standards of what is broadcast inheres in the right to communicate by broadcasting; that is, that there is a power, but that no responsibility goes with it. On this argument, the responsibility is literally - and wrongly - assumed by the broadcasting authorities.

9. Second, what the public want: how are the broadcasting authorities to know who are the public, and what it wants? For the following reasons it is not enough to ascertain which, of the programme items available, are seen by most people.

    (i) The majority is not the public. There are minorities; and the broadcasting authorities must decide how far to provide for them.

    (ii) The mass audience is not the public. It may comprise, say, ten million individuals, with a low average of enjoyment. It might comprise five separate audiences of, say, two millions, each greatly enjoying a different programme for one-fifth of the time. The broadcasting authorities must decide what is the public: the audience of ten millions; or the five audiences of two millions.

    (iii) The public's choice of what it listens to and views: if the idea of choice is to have real meaning, the range of choice must be exhaustive. But the public can hardly know what the range is. It must be for the broadcasting authorities to know it, and to present it.

    (iv) Further, it must be someone's duty to look out for new material. It can hardly be the duty of the public. It must be the duty of the broadcasting authorities. If it is said that the mass following of present popular programmes shows what the public really want, the answer is that it is neither good logic to conclude that they do not want to try something new and different, nor good public service to deny them the opportunity.

10. We have already seen that no-one advocates complete paternalism. It is also evident that if "What the public wants" has any meaning, the public has a right to expect at several points a lead from the broadcasting authorities. What the public want is the opportunity to find out what they want; and the broadcasting authorities must provide the opportunity. So, while the broadcasting authorities cannot be too well aware of public opinion, including minority opinions, on their programmes, and must constantly seek to satisfy it, they also have a duty to bring to public awareness and choice the widest possible range of worthwhile experience. If they are to do so, they must give a lead. The task of the broadcasting authorities is to reconcile these two aims. And the risks they must guard against are, on the one hand, of losing touch with opinion; of exclusiveness; and even of condescension; and on the other, of mistaking the statistical norm for the individual; of supposing that sets switched on is a measure of satisfaction; of restricting public choice to those kinds of programme items which are known to get and hold the mass audience.

11. The Committee might like to consider whether it wishes to found its examination of broadcasting authorities and programme companies on these arguments. If so, the examination would seek to establish from a consideration of the written evidence, from Members' own experience, and from oral hearings how far the broadcasting authorities are aware of the two aims; and how far their performance has matched them.

Appendix C.

One week's programmes from the specimen schedule submitted by the Revd. David Skinner on behalf of the Church of England Radio and Television Council, May 1961.

(TNA: HO244/20, BC/471)

Saturday 7 October

6.00 pm *News and Weather*
6.15 *Private View* Peter James visits Augustus John in his Chelsea studio
6.45 *You asked for it!* Sir George Thompson, the Bishop of Exeter and Dr. Helen Gardner answer the questions you ask
7.15 *World without End* Land of the Lapps
7.45 *Double Beat* The latest in Beat with Johnny Dankworth and his band
8.15 *On the Touchline* Highlights from today's big sporting events, England v. Brazil, Hockey, Rowing, Table Tennis.
9.45 *Saturday Night Debut* Oliver Tidsley, aged 17, sings to his own guitar
10.00 *A Faith for Living* (3) The Christian Family. The Rev. R. Mcintyre.
10.15 Close Down.

Sunday 8 October

6.00 pm *Week-end Round Up*
6.15 *Why I believe* (2) Professor C.S. Lewis
6.30 Down to Earth This week the Church in Action camera focuses on the Hospital Chaplain
7.0 *Eye of Faith* Television's own Church Service for the whole family
7.30 *Hobby Horse* Philip Trenchard's hobby is bird photography. Tonight he shows viewers how it is done.
8.0 *Sunday Playhouse* ' St. Joan' by George Bernard Shaw.
9.15 *Next Week* looks at the news before it happens
9.30 *On Record* (??)
10.0 *Evening Prayer*

Monday 9 October

6.0 *News and Weather*
6.15 *Man of the Moment* (??)
6.30 *Varsity Quiz* Teams from Nottingham and Southampton Universities try to find an answer to your questions.
7.0 *Symphony Concert* Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra play Brahms, Mahler. Direct transmission from Hamburg
7.45 *Nature's World* The Badger
8.15 *Love in a Mist* Falling in Love
9.0 *It's a Job* The Bank Clerk
9.30 *The Earth We Walk On* The minerals in or under the earth's crust. With two geologists.
10.0 *A Faith for Living* Christ and Marriage (1) Commitment
10.15 Close Down

Tuesday 10 October

6.15 *Music of the People* with the London Choral Society
7.0 *Soapbox* presents Is there a case for Apartheid? Panel includes Bishop Reeves
7.45 *Hat Trick Man* Every woman knows the name of Pierre Balman (sic), leading hat designer. Janet Blair shows viewers highlights from his autumn collection.
8.0 *Sporting Print* A magazine programme of outdoor interests. Tonight: Camping, Shooting, Cycling.
8.30 *Beneath the Skin* "Excavating the Brain". From the operating theatre of Frenchay Hospital, Bristol.
8.45 *Public Faces* The Archbishop of Canterbury
9.15 *Below the Food-line* Every year a million of India's people die of malnutrition. James Bryan investigates.
10.0 *A Faith for Living*

Wednesday 11 October

6.15 *You and Your Child* Inoculation: The facts.
7.0 *Space Ship Special* The Path to Glory. Leading scientists examine the uses - and abuses - of space
7.30 *Music Makers* The Organ: Dr. J. Dykes-Bower, organist at St. Paul's Cathedral.
8.0 *First Night* presents "Overtures in Spring" a new play by Joan Cadogan
9.0 *The Law Says* This week: Dogs, Dustbins and Washing
9.15 *Stately Home-Builder* John Nash (1732-1780) built for an age of elegance. The roving camera visits his greatest creations. Narrator: John Betjeman.
9.30 *Partners, Please* Simon Worcester and Judy Costello make dancing easy. Tonight's specialities: the Tango, the Rumba and the Cha-Cha
10.0 *A Faith for Living*

Thursday 11 October

6.15 *A Date with Music* This week's guest, Larry Adler
6.30 *Six Fatal Feet* A programme about the common house-fly and its even commoner habits
7.0 *The Young Idea* Hire Purchase Heaven How much can newly-weds buy on the never-never? What are the snags?
7.45 *World Religions* The Moslem revival. What is this faith that rules the lives of millions?
8.15 *Opera Glass* A Midsummer Night's Dream by Benjamin Britten. With the Glyndebourne Opera Company. Recording from the Edinburgh Festival.
10.30 *A Faith for Living*

Friday 13 October

6.15 *Half-hour Hansard* John Mallalieu M.P.
6.45 *Garden Party* Pot plants for your house. Shewell Cooper talks about cyclamen, azaleas and primulas
7.0 *Great Musicians* Toscanini
7.30 *Make and Mend* William Weston, Carpenter, shows viewers how to build cold frames and deckchairs, Elspeth Jordan speaks on making new curtains, and Paul Trenter exhibits a home-made washing-up machine
8.0 *Box Office presents:* The Brothers Karamazov by Feodor Dostoievsky
9.30 *Mahatma Gandhi* by Professor James Tyrrel, Professor of Modern History in the University of Aberdeen
10.0 *A Faith for Living.*

Appendix D

'The Newark Thesis'

25th September, 1961
Author: Professor F. H. Newark.

(TNA: HO244/22, BC/574).

I THE SET-UP

1. The scheme of the 1954 Act is to entrust a newly-created segment of the broadcasting monopoly to a complex set-up which is generally referred to as I.T.V. This set-up contains as its main components a public non-profit-making corporation designated the Authority and an indefinite number of programme contractors which are profit-making companies.

2. Though the Act provides that it is the function of the Authority "to provide...television broadcasting services" it also provides that the programmes shall be provided "not by the Authority but by ... 'programme contractors' who...have...the right and duty to provide programmes". And, lastly, the Act provides that "The programmes broadcast by the Authority may...include advertisements inserted therein in consideration of payment to the "relevant programme contractor".

3. There are two defects in principle in this set-up:

   (a) the fact that the Authority charged with the duty of providing television broadcasting services is not in a master-servant relationship to those actually providing the material which constitutes the broadcasting service inevitably weakens the control which can be exercised by the Authority. This in itself would not be so bad if the factual situation were not that after the Authority has performed its initial task of selecting a programme contractor that contractor has within its own area a franchise which cannot be too substantially controlled without depriving the listeners in whole or in part of the broadcasting services which the Authority is bound to provide.

   (b) the broadcasting service which the Authority is under a duty to provide has to be financed by advertisement revenue, but the raising of such revenue is in the entire control of the programme contractors. The net result is:

      (i) a hybrid organization of a truly remarkable kind. You have the consumers (the public) who are thirsty for entertainment. The entertainment is provided by programme companies, but it is not provided directly to the consumers but through an intermediary (the Authority) which exercises a function, partly of a loose supervisory nature and partly of a mechanical nature as an electronic conduit pipe. So far so good, but as the programme companies are clearly not going to produce programmes without reward, and as the Authority has not the wherewithal to remunerate them, and as the consumers are not going to put up any money if they can help it, the parasitic element of advertising is grafted on to the set-up. It is parasitic because though it flourishes, it is superfluous to the main operation. The

consumers don't want advertising; [6] *(Footnotes in original)* the Authority has no interest in advertising; [7] the programme companies fundamentally have no interest in advertising. [8] The only people who are interested in advertising are the advertising firms, but paradoxically they are the one set of people in the organization who have no interest in the main purpose of the operation. Advertisers are not interested in "information, education and entertainment", and as far as the technicalities are concerned they don't mind whether the advertisement gets on the screens by electronics, mirrors, extra-sensory perception or what not, so long as it gets there.

(ii) an organization in which there is an inevitable disparity of purpose between the summit of the organization and the "centre of gravity" (those engaged in producing the commodity in which the undertaking deals). The fact that the interest may be purely mercenary does not matter. Similarly in a non-profit-making organization (a church, a regiment, a university, a charitable society) there is a unity of purpose between those in control and those who do the spadework. But in the organization of which we are speaking there is an inevitable disparity of purpose between the two components: the programme companies are directed by the profit motive: the Authority is essentially not profit-making. Whereas the purpose of the Act was to provide an alternative television programme which would be financed by advertising, the result has been to make independent television an advertising business which is supported through the medium of entertainment.

II THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE "SET-UP"

From these two fundamental defects in principle flow almost all the shortcomings, real or alleged, which have emerged in the course of our discussions.

1. The excessive profits made by the programme contractors

The real objection to these profits is not that they are excessive, but that they are excessive profits made as the result of a monopoly, i.e. the monopoly of television advertising. Each programme company has within its area the monopoly of this particular medium, and the essential evil of monopoly has long been recognised in the English political system. A monopoly is essentially a power given by way of privilege to one or a few and denied to the many others, and where a monopoly is a source of large pecuniary gain it is manifestly objectionable.

2. The pursuit of mass peak-hour audiences at the price of lack of balance and low standards

Since the set-up presupposes that the remuneration of the programme contractors depends on advertising revenue rather than direct payment for the entertainment they provide, and as advertising revenue must depend on size of audience, the contractors' sights are inevitably fixed on the size of audience. To expect otherwise is to expect them to go against the generality of human nature.

3. Lack of balance and low standards generally

Though the duty of maintaining balance and standards rests both on the Authority and the contractors, yet ultimately this is the responsibility of the Authority. But by the nature of the set-up the Authority

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[6] It is true that there is some evidence that some of the viewers find some of the advertisements amusing, but if advertisements ceased to appear on the screen there would be no national uprising.

[7] For the Authority advertising means more work and worry.

[8] As long as the equivalent amount of money flows into their coffers the programme companies couldn't care less whether it came from advertisement revenue, the Consolidated Fund or the generosity of Lord Nuffield.

has no immediate formulation of the programmes or of the way they are networked. Most of the means of control are, to a greater or lesser degree, ex post facto means of control.

4. The Authority is lethargic and lacks a sense of purpose

And why should we be surprised? The set-up has put the Authority in the position of a sort of night-watchman, and the function of a night-watchman is to doze until trouble arises. The Authority has no share in the production of programmes so it naturally has no opportunities for developing initiative. Any purpose or creative effort is denied to it. Its function proves as stultifying as would be - say - the function of a university professor who was debarred from lecturing and research and restricted to examining the efforts of others.

5. Failure to co-ordinate with the B.B.C.

The B.B.C.'s animus is directed mainly against the lucrative element in I.T.V. As long as the centre of gravity is in the programme contractors rather than the Authority this animus will remain. With an independent Authority in true command the situation would improve.

6. The inadequacy of the programme companies in the regions

The programme companies in the regions are often under fire for providing too little of the "regional element" in the programme. The present set-up means that a programme company in the peripheral regions is, as far as most of the programme is concerned, merely a conduit pipe for programmes from the big companies. For the most part its only positive activities are in the field of advertising. It is a little naïve to expect it to direct enthusiastic efforts to produce local programmes when these programmes are the least satisfactory vehicle for its main interest, i.e. the advertising interest.

7. The "natural break" scandal

If the I.T.A. were responsible for the lay-out of programmes and networking this could be cured overnight.

8. Complaints

It has frequently appeared that people with legitimate grievances against independent television do not know the quarter in which they can voice these grievances. This is because the I.T.A. has no standing in the public eye. Under a new set-up with the I.T.A. in charge of programming and networking, and the programmes manifestly appearing on the screen as appearing under the aegis of the I.T.A., there would be no doubts here.

III THE REMEDY

The Act of 1954 should be amended to:-

(i) put the Authority in control of networking so as to enable it to plan a national I.T.V. programme.
(ii) provide that the Authority should provide the service by contracting with programme companies to supply it with individual programmes.
(iii) enable the Authority to raise revenue by selling advertising time.

Appendix E

The Arguments over Pay-Television.

In the first weeks of the Committee's operations in the summer of 1960 its Secretary, Dennis Lawrence, produced 'An Outline Appraisal of the Committee's Task'.[9] It included the following paragraph:

> Various interests would like to see the introduction of subscription (pay-as-you-view) television and applications have been made [to the Postmaster-General] for the start of experiments for this type of service.

A paper followed on 'Subscription Television' (BC/Sec/4).[10] Paragraphs 3-6 are reproduced below:

> 3. A number of concerns have shown great interest in the possibility of operating a subscription television service in the United Kingdom. The Committee may be asked whether it could make an early report on the subject; or whether it would agree to an experiment.
>
> 4. The Committee will wish to consider whether it can separate the subject from others which it will have to consider. Listed below are some of the considerations which arise:
>
> (i) A subscription television service would be an additional programme. It would involve the general question whether there should be additional television programmes and if so who should run them. A number of claims and counter-claims have already been made.
>
> (ii) It may be said that a line service only would be contemplated, and so would not involve the question of additional programmes broadcast by radio. But could a line system serve the whole country? Or would it be the first step to a broadcast service? And would not a line system in all other respects raise just the same issues of policy as a radio system?
>
> (iii) For example, subscription television is a commercial television: it has a service for sale. Would it seek the biggest paying audience? Or would it provide for minorities?
>
> (iv) Hitherto, for all broadcasting services in the United Kingdom, however financed, a public corporation has been answerable for content, quality and balance of programmes. Would this concept be compatible with a service of subscription television?
>
> (v) What would be the effect on the two existing broadcasting bodies? Would there be a sharper fight for the "mass-audience" and would standards decline? Would the public be willing to pay extra for items (e.g. the Cup Final) they now see for the price of a licence fee? Would the licence fee system remain acceptable?[11]
>
> (vi) What will be the views of the providers of live entertainment? Is there a prospect of an enormous stay-at-home audience watching a greatly reduced number of shows, plays, matches, etc.?
>
> (vii) A very general question: is there a risk that subscription television would make television into an instrument of the entertainment and sports business, instead of leaving it as a medium in its own right, and one which draws on many fields of activity?
>
> 5. The questions suggested above are simply the more obvious; no doubt there are others. But the Committee may think that they serve to show that the question of subscription television could not be dealt with separately as the subject of an early recommendation.

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[9] TNA: HO244/4 Paper BC/Sec/3 'An Outline Appraisal of the Committee's Task'.

[10] TNA: HO244/4 Paper BC/Sec/4 'Subscription Television'.

[11] It may be noted in the 2000s that with the spread of digital subscription television the acceptability of the licence fee has been raised most insistently.

6. The suggestion that there might be an experiment may seem attractive. But it is doubtful whether reliable information would be available in less than two years from the start of an experiment. Even then, it would primarily be information about the commercial viability of subscription television. For the Committee, it would be lacking a vital point: because an experiment would be local in scope, it could not provide reliable information on the effect of a nation-wide service on the existing broadcasting services to the public. And of course it would require the Committee to prejudge other questions.

At the Committee's second meeting, on October 7, Sir Harry announced that the Postmaster-General had asked if he could meet him together with the President of the Board of Trade, Reginald Maudling, 'to discuss the desirability of an early experiment in subscription television'. The main argument in favour of an experiment was said to be that it would 'facilitate the sale overseas of the kind of equipment used'. But an under-strength Committee - only seven members including the Chairman were present (Hoggart, for example, was absent) - agreed with all the arguments advanced in Lawrence's paper, particularly noting that the main consideration for them should not be export sales, but 'the far-reaching consequences' an experiment could have on British broadcasting.

At the sixth meeting, on November 16, Sir Harry reported that he, along with Edmund Hudson, had met the President of the Board of Trade. 'The Chairman thought that the President had, in the end, accepted the Committee's point of view'.[12] Maudling's determination to press the point was being underestimated. He, on the other hand, also underestimated the Committee's decision to stand firm.

In December, the Committee received a submission from British Home Entertainment Ltd., which had been set up to operate what it called a 'Toll Television' system.

It Chairman was Field Marshal Viscount Slim, a former Chief of the Imperial General Staff and Governor-General of Australia. Its Vice-Chairman was Lord Brabourne, described as 'a film producer', with royal connections (he was Lord Mountbatten's son-in-law).[13] The Board of Directors included the Earl of Harewood (the Queen's cousin), Sir Laurence Olivier and Dame Margot Fonteyn. A City merchant bank was also represented.

Extracts from its submission are given below:

> It has become increasingly clear that if this country is to be provided with a television service of a quality that it has the right to expect, this can only be done by means of a third television channel, whose aim and responsibility would be to provide a genuine alternative to the existing programmes.
> The introduction of such a channel can only justify itself if it sets out to raise the standards of British television entertainment, by providing programmes of the highest quality for the few, as well as programmes of the highest quality for the many. The new channel must provide:-
> (i) Frequent opportunities for the public to see and hear first-rate performances, in every sphere, by the outstanding dramatic, musical and film talent of our own and other countries.
> (ii) Programmes which will help the average man to expand his interest in science and technology in their relationship to his own present and future; and which will increase his awareness and understanding of the political, social and economic organization and administration of the world around him
> (iii) Discussion programmes, with sufficient time at their disposal for the listener and viewer to feel that he is really gaining some knowledge and understanding of the subjects under review.

[12] TNA: HO244 Minutes of meetings 3 and 6. But see below.
[13] See p.236 below for some evidence that Mountbatten helped in the campaign.

(iv) Programmes of explanation and enlightenment in mass sports: Association and Rugby football, cricket, and many other such activities in which the great majority have little opportunity of instruction (e.g. horsemanship, fishing, sailing, golf, tennis).

(v) The building-up of a production industry capable of turning-out first-class programme material for the Home and Overseas markets; which would enable Britain to compete with the United States in providing programmes for the television services which will be set up in the newly emerging countries, both in the Commonwealth and elsewhere.

...

Toll Television, which is the mechanical means by which the viewer pays a small sum for individual programmes of his choice, can, like any other form of entertainment, survive and flourish only if it attracts willing purchasers of the programmes that it sells ... its financing would be geared neither to advertising revenue nor to a Government subvention or subsidy. It should, therefore, be able to satisfy the wishes of viewers without imposing any burden on the taxpayer.

...

In the field of popular entertainment, BHE would aim at bringing before the public the great entertainers of the stage and screen, and the great occasions of sport. But apart from the televising of sporting events of all kinds, we believe that there is scope for explanatory programmes devoted to mass sports, entertainingly produced and illustrated by the play of experts, by diagrams etc. BHE would also aim, quite early in their operation, to commission good films for Toll television, using the leading talent in the film industry ...
Toll television could afford to put on the kind of programmes which - at any rate in the early stages - would appeal to relatively small sections of the viewing audience. If, for example, no more than 250,000 set owners, spread over the country, were prepared to pay half-a-crown to see a performance of contemporary or classical opera, it would be financially feasible to stage a performance with the greatest singers in the world, in any one of the established opera houses. The same considerations would apply to ballet, to "star performances" of Shakespeare, and to other major dramatic works.

In a later, 'more detailed' submission, made in July 1961, BHE indicated that it would accept a government decision to transmit its programmes either 'by wire or over-the-air'.[14] By the Spring of 1961, three other companies, British Telemeter Home Viewing, Choiceview, and Tolvision, all nearly as well-connected as BHE, had made detailed proposals for Pay TV. Granada Television was associated with British Telemeter, and Rediffusion with Choiceview.

Despite Sir Harry's reassurance to the Committee in November, pro-subscription Cabinet ministers returned to the topic early in 1961. A minute for the Prime Minister from Norman Brook said on January 9 that the Cabinet had decided 'in the course of discussion on a proposed experiment in subscription television that it might be possible to persuade the Pilkington Committee that such an experiment would not prejudice their

[14] Cmnd 1919, papers 213 & 214, submissions from British Home Entertainment. With no evidence available, it is impossible to know whether the company was sincere in making its claims. The prospectus may, however, reasonably be compared, by those who are familiar with it, to the rather less ambitious actual performance over nearly two decades of the subscription-financed and eventually highly profitable satellite service, Sky Television. 250,000 half-a-crowns would allow, it is estimated, after paying fixed costs, a maximum budget of £20,000 for an operatic performance by 'the greatest singers in the world', perhaps £500,000 to £600,000 in contemporary terms. The technology which would allow potentially profitable video recording and domestic sales did not, of course, then exist. A producer in 2004 would need to allow a budget of at least £5,000,000 for such a broadcast. Reginald Bevins' conversation with J.D. Camacho of the BBC in October 1960 has been cited in Chapters Three and Five above. In a passage not yet quoted, Camacho also says that he 'understood some people to believe that pay-as-you-view might save the film industry. [Bevins] scoffed at the idea'. See p.70 above.

work'. But Brook went on to point out that its terms of reference meant that the Committee would be bound to resist.

> The Committee themselves consider that [it would prejudice their work] and their view has not, so far as I know, been questioned ... If the experiment were successful, either in the sense of revealing a popular demand or of turning out profitable to its promoters (which amounts to the same thing)), I cannot help thinking - specially with the strong reinforcing argument of the exports market - that the Government would feel bound to allow subscription television on a more general basis, whatever the Pilkington Committee would have said.

Bevins, as Postmaster-General, was opposed to the idea, whereas it seems Maudling continued to support it. Brook himself thought that the arguments in favour of an experiment were 'attractive', despite the possibility that if the Cabinet pushed too hard, members of the Committee, including Sir Harry himself, might resign.

> I can only suggest that we should put the position frankly to the Committee and hope - though I am not very sure how hopeful this is - that we can persuade them not to do anything precipitate[15]... At their last meeting the Cabinet agreed to resume their discussion of this question at a later date. You may wish to consider whether it might be useful for you to have some discussion beforehand with the President of the Board of Trade and the Postmaster-General, in order to try to reduce the difference between them. My impression is, however, that the difference is so wide that little could be achieved by this; and you may think it best that the Cabinet should take up their discussion where they left it at the last meeting.[16]

A note was scribbled in the margin by this last paragraph: 'Yes. H.M. 10/1'.

It was Butler, as Chairman of the Cabinet's Home Affairs Committee, who met Sir Harry on February 15, as we know from Sir Harry's diary. No official account of the meeting has survived. Sir Harry's diary records only: 'Home Secretary at 4 o'clock ... Very useful and very friendly'. At the Cabinet meeting on February 21, Peter Thorneycroft, as Minister of Aviation with responsibility for technology exports, took up the cause of a Pay TV experiment. Pressure continued to be applied. On June 9 Sir Harry wrote to Lawrence with an account of a chance encounter between his wife and Reginald Bevins on a train to Liverpool. Bevins had spoken of a meeting Macmillan had had with the Earl of Swinton, a close political associate and friend of Macmillan, who had helped pilot the 1954 Television Act through the House of Lords as its Deputy Leader. Now, it seems, Swinton had joined the pay-television lobby. 'As a result of that meeting', according to Sir Harry's letter, Bevins had told Lady Pilkington that:

> The Prime Minister urged us to get a move on with Pay-Television, of which we already knew, but what I did not know was that Lord Mountbatten had gone to the special trouble of taking a room for Lord Brabourne next to Mr. Bevins' room in some hotel on some occasion so that Brabourne could have the opportunity to press the claim of their own home entertainment Pay-television programme.[17]

But the pressure was resisted. Thorneycroft wrote to the Prime Minister on June 19.

> You will remember that at the meeting of the Cabinet on 21st February, I was invited, in consultation with the President of the Board of Trade, to put to Sir Harry Pilkington the commercial advantages we foresaw of allowing an experiment in subscription television in advance of the report of his committee. Since then, I have made some further investigations into this question. I have come to the conclusion that on balance it would be wrong to press this

[15] By which Brook presumably meant mass resignations.
[16] TNA: CAB21/4275, minute from Sir Norman Brook, January 9 1961.
[17] NA HO/244/234, letter from Sir Harry Pilkington to Dennis Lawrence, June 9 1961.

particular point. I would propose therefore to take no further action. I am sending a copy of this minute to the President of the Board of Trade.[18]

The threat of resignation was being taken seriously. A note by Norman Brook recorded on June 23 that:

> although the Cabinet agreed to resume their discussion [of subscription television] at a later meeting, I do not think that this need now come back. Their view was clearly recorded that 'whatever might be the strength of the case for allowing the experiment, the government could not, politically, risk an open breach with the Pilkington Committee over it'. Sir Harry Pilkington made his views amply clear to the Home Secretary in February, and now that the Minister of Aviation has decided not to tackle him, I suggest we can regard the matter as decided.[19]

The Pilkington Committee's principled opposition to any form of pay-television was confirmed at their fifty-fourth meeting on September 6, 1961. In the minutes of the meeting, there is no mention of any cabinet pressure over the proposed experiment.

It is reasonable to assume that news of the Committee's decision would have found its way to the BBC, whose attitude to pay-television was changing. In April 1962 a paper examining the case for it was produced inside the BBC Secretariat.[20] A note explained that, although it was not intended for widespread public distribution, the Director-General had authorised it 'as a hand-out to people outside the BBC'. It presented the 'the case' for pay-television in one column of several sheets of paper, and 'the case examined' in another column. Extracts from it are reproduced below, though not in that format:

"A higher standard of entertainment"

The case:

Pay-television offers the prospect of programmes of the highest quality for minority audiences as well as for mass audiences - programmes of a standard and variety considerably beyond the range of existing television.
The programmes would include popular entertainment by the great entertainers of stage and screen; great sporting occasions, the best of the West End plays and shows; first class films using the leading talents of the film industry; contemporary or classical opera with the greatest singers in the world; ballet, star performances of Shakespeare and other dramatic works.
Pay-television will have the means of programming of a standard hitherto unknown.
A service occupying at least three channels is visualised, with two channels for entertainment every day of the week. The third channel would offer adult education on a non-profit making basis.

The case examined:

What is immediately apparent is the costliness of what is proposed. Over and above the technical outlay, pay television would evidently be very expensive indeed.
Most of what is offered already figures on the television screen, but some of it - full length plays from the theatre, new feature films, certain prize fights - is not at present available for television. Such material has been withheld for a variety of reasons affecting the long term interests of the activities concerned. Very large sums of money would have to be offered to the promoters of such entertainment in return for

[18] TNA: CAB21/4275, letter from Peter Thorneycroft, June 21, 1961.
[19] TNA: CAB21/4275, note from Sir Norman Brook, June 23, 1961.
[20] BBC WAC: R4/38/18, Pay Television: The Case Examined.

television rights. Alternatively, pay television would have to build up a film and play production industry of its own on a prodigious scale - and engage in great sports promotion too.
But these could only be the peak events in a regular service of programmes on two channels, the vast majority of which must be of kinds that figure in television as we know it today. Programmes of these kinds must be made to draw a regular income, day in day out, from subscribers willing to make a special payment to see them Pay television cannot subsist on peak events alone.
It is claimed that pay television might be a means of bringing contemporary opera and ballet to the people of this country, together with other programmes for minorities. The economics of pay television suggest, on the contrary, that only popular kinds of programmes could yield the revenue that would be necessary to sustain the high costs of the operation.

...

"A freedom of choice"

The case:

Television has so far been denied the freedom of choice expressed by means of the box office which is allowed in every other sphere of entertainment. Pay television will enable the public to see what it wants and not just what it will tolerate.
Pay television will, like any other form of entertainment, survive and flourish only if it attracts willing purchasers of its programmes.
Its success will depend on its ability to offer, consistently, programmes for which the public (or part of it) is prepared to pay a commercial price.
A successful service will be established only if such a range of programmes is offered as will appeal to the many varied tastes of its potential subscribers.
Unlike any other form of television, pay television will be able to gauge accurately and immediately the extent to which it is satisfying its audience, whether mass audiences or sectional and minority interests.

The case examined:

The danger of television programmes being just tolerated, rather than being positively enjoyed, is a real one. It is often better to give great pleasure to a relatively small number of people than it is to give mild pleasure to a larger number. Pay television would not be alone, however, in being able to gauge accurately the extent to which its programmes were satisfying its customers. The BBC does not concern itself in its audience research solely with measuring the size of its audience. It pays equal attention to studying their reactions. It is alone in this country in regularly doing this.
Pay television would certainly for the first time enable some members of the public to pay for items that they wanted to see. This is not the same thing as enabling the public to see what it wants to see.
Pay television must pay its way. It could not live on items which the effective demand from subscribers was insufficient to meet the high costs of the operation, however much individual subscribers might want such items.
Pay television could benefit only its subscribers, not the public as a whole.
There is a real danger, if pay television was introduced that the freedom of choice of the non-subscribing public, and those parts of the public not within reach of a pay television service, would suffer a diminution instead of the enlargement of the area of choice that is desirable.
...

"A real alternative"

The case examined:

- What is clear, from an examination of the case now put forward, is that pay television would in fact be in full competition with the existing television services. If successful it could only impoverish them.
- Who would benefit? Not the public as a whole. Pay television, as seen on the present evidence, would stand to benefit some people, in the major centres of population, who were within the range of a service, and who were able and willing to afford substantial extra payments for the privilege.

It was evident that the BBC's campaign to run a putative pay-television service was over.

The government's enthusiasm, however, was undiminished. The White Paper it published in December 1962 announced that it would authorise a limited number of experiments in order to answer some of the questions that had been raised.[21] It was not until 1966 that three experiments were set up for pay-television by wire - two in different parts of London, and one in Sheffield. Five further stations were authorised in 1972, one more in London, and four in provincial towns, specifically to produce local material, transmitted through relay systems to those who already using them to receive the main BBC and ITV channels.[22] But none attracted large numbers of subscribers; by 1985 all had closed. The Peacock Committee recommended in 1986 that the BBC could be paid for by subscription; that recommendation was rejected. Subscription television began to attract numbers of customers in the 1990s, first because of the appeal of Sky Television, part of the Rupert Murdoch empire, and later, after the merger with British Satellite Broadcasting, because of the greater appeal of hundreds of digital channels on BSkyB, partly controlled by Murdoch. By 1996, one in five households in Britain was paying to receive BSkyB channels, either on cable or satellite.[23]

[21] Cmnd. 1893, paras. 45/46
[22] Cmnd. 6753, 'The Annan Report', para. 2.14.
[23] Crisell, *Introductory History,*, p. 241.

Appendix F.

From the *Daily Mirror*, June 28, 1962.

Judge for yourself - this is what Pilkington says.

by William Greig.

A bombshell - that's the Pilkington Report on T V and broadcasting, issued yesterday. It slates Independent Television for "trivial" programmes. It urges drastic curbs on the powers and profits of the ITV companies. It awards the proposed third channel to the BBC...and talks of a £6 licence. It backs colour television. It calls for a speedy change to 625-line pictures. It bans Pay-as-you-view. Read the report below - and judge.

UNDER THE EYE OF THE MAESTRO

Looking at the whole picture of television programmes, the Pilkington Committee say that too many put a false face on life.
For the sake of an easy appeal, the Committee adds, television portrays too often a world in which the moral standards generally assumed in society are either ignored or flouted.
For a similar reason, television shows excessive violence.
Dissatisfaction at the portrayal of violence was expressed in evidence to the Committee on three main grounds:

1. Scenes of violence frighten small children.
2. Such scenes may lead children to dangerous, even disastrous, experiments.
3. Showing violence encourages anti-social, callous and vicious behaviour.

One piece of evidence quoted came from the Association of Municipal Corporations, which thought some programmes featured "sordid, unsavoury and violent themes, and presented a false picture of life as though it were normal".

The 'Trivial' Programmes

Disquiet and dissatisfaction over television is "justly attributed" to the Independent programmes, says the report.
The natural inclination has been to put the sale of advertising time first.
Portrayal of violence, its amount, treatment and timing, are unsatisfactory. Many programmes are trivial.[24]
The report declares " Independent television does not successfully realise the purpose of broadcasting" as laid down by Parliament.
Independent television was intended to provide -
First, a service realising as fully as possible the purpose of broadcasting;
Second - and only incidentally - to provide a service for advertisers.

For Viewers - a Failure

The Committee find that ITV has succeeded as far as advertisers are concerned - and failed so far as the viewers are concerned.
The programme companies' profits are, according to the Committee, generally regarded as excessive - although it is emphasised that what is essentially wrong is not the profits but just poor broadcasting.

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[24] Arguably, this account is to be faulted for omitting that 'triviality', as understood by the Report, could occur in all kinds of programmes, including 'serious' ones.

There is no policy of asking "What is television doing to society?" Instead, the general aim seems to be to hold a mirror up to society and reflect it - violence and all.

'Surrender of Authority'

The Committee say they are "disturbed" by the views of the Independent Television Authority, which has the duty of seeing that the commercial companies carry out the Government's intentions.
The Authority discounted the influence of television and minimised its effect on the public.
The report points out that the BBC has a written code governing scenes of violence. ITV has not- the Authority leaves it to the individual companies.
"This amounts to a surrender of authority" say the Pilkington Committee.
On ITV advertisements, too, the report is critical.

Unnatural Breaks

Many ITV programmes do not contain natural breaks and some are patently contrived in timing and frequency, the Report goes on.
The definition of false and misleading advertisements is not strict enough. Advertisements relying on a socially undesirable appeal are common.
These are advertisements which imply that a viewer who does not buy the product will have cause for shame, or cannot hope for happiness.

Slap for the Quiz Games

The report comes down on the side of those who condemn the quiz programmes.
It recommends that prizes in "party games" which require no skill should be nominal.
There **could** be higher prizes where skill or special ability is needed - but limited, and nowhere near the present level.
The **CONTEST - not the MONEY - must be the focus of interest, the report says.**
The present limit of £1,000 is regarded as far too high. With prizes at this level, the appeal is to "suspense and greed and fear".
It is not real entertainment, in the Committee's view.
Speaking of the "disquiet and dissatisfaction" arising from ITV programmes, the report says:
"This is so, despite the popularity of the service and the well-known fact that many of its programmes command the largest audiences".
The report emphasises that huge audiences are not the best proof of good service.

ITA Should Take Over

Here is the new set-up the Pilkington Committee advocate for commercial television:

1. The Independent Television Authority, now merely a "watchdog", to be given real power and to take over planning of the programmes and the sale of advertising time.
2. The programme companies to produce and sell programmes which the Authority can buy.
3. The Authority, after making provision for reserves, to pay any surplus revenue to the Exchequer.

"Viewing Britain" would be divided at first into England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland - and then, if necessary, sub-divided. Each area would be under an executive.
Basically, the programme in each area would be a network one planned at the Authority's headquarters.
Area executives, however, could provide programmes of local interest.
Programme companies would be appointed on contracts for perhaps three years. In each area, one company would provide local news bulletins and programmes.
The Authority would guarantee to buy a specified amount of good-quality programmes from each company.
News bulletins would be provided by a separate company. It is hoped that this would be ITN, which is highly praised for its work on a limited budget.

BBC: 'Room to Improve'

The Committee accept that the BBC is acutely aware of the power of television, and regards itself as answerable for the general influence it exerts.
Witnesses before the Committee suggested that the BBC had "lowered its standards" to compete.[25]
"If its policies leave little to be desired, there is still room for improvement in practice," say the Committee.
The BBC is found to be aware of the danger of triviality - but has not always avoided it.
The report recommends that the BBC Charter be renewed in 1964 for twelve years.

'Switch the System Now'

The Committee say that the Government should immediately authorise a change from the 405-line system to the 625-line system.
It turns down the plea that this change to the Continental system would be too difficult and too costly to undertake.
"Do it by means of duplicate programmes", the report says.
Every viewer could then use his set - old or new. In any case it may be ten or fifteen years before **EVERYONE** in Britain can see 625-line pictures on their sets.

That Third Channel

Both the BBC and the ITV companies staked claims before the Committee for another channel.
The Cabinet is advised in the report to give it to the BBC - but is told a separate Welsh programme on the 405-line system should come first.
So long as Independent television is organized as at present, it should not be allowed any additional service.
But if it reorganised it could also have a second channel within five years.
The Pilkington Committee say "Yes" to colour television - but add that it must be on the 625-line system.
This puts it two or three years ahead - and by then it believes that colour receiving sets will be sufficiently developed.
But it will be years before colour reaches the whole country.

Other points:

- If the BBC gets all the Committee suggest, it would mean a £6-a-year licence.[26]
- The Committee men turn down Pay-as-you-view Television - because it would mean that ordinary licence-holders would miss big events which had been bought up.

[25] No mention is made here of other witnesses who claimed that BBC programmes had improved as a result of competition from ITV.
[26] No mention is made here of the recommendation for the BBC to start a network of local radio stations, to be paid for out of the increased licence fee. Nor of the Report's rejection of commercial radio.

From the *Daily Mail*, June 28, 1962.

T V - for Trivia and Violence

LOUIS KIRBY *SUMS UP THE BLISTERING ATTACK*

VERDICT We are impressed by the BBC's awareness of the nature, the magnitude, and the complexity of the task of catering for the public.
VERDICT The companies would be free to produce and sell programmes to the rest of the world.
VERDICT The disquiet about and dissatisfaction with T.V. are, in our view, justly attributed to the service of ITV. That is so, despite the popularity of the service.
VERDICT The criticism that party game items in some variety shows on ITV often humiliate the members of the public who take part in them is, in our view, justified.
VERDICT Some ITV programmes have been excellent. But the general judgement is unmistakeable. The service falls well short of what a good public service of broadcasting should be.
VERDICT We have considered whether old-age pensioners should qualify for a reduced rate of licence fee, but reject the idea on the grounds of principle and practicability.
VERDICT The size of the companies' profits would certainly re reduced if the ITA proposals are accepted. That this will happen in one way or another is inevitable.

A blistering verdict on the image of Britain's T.V. - directed almost entirely at ITV - was delivered yesterday by the 11-member Pilkington jury.
In their inch-thick report the committee project a picture of triviality[27] and violence, of programmes that lower moral standards, of advertisements that exploit "human weakness".
ITN and the BBC news service escape the attack. Both are fair and objective, says the report.
Sifting 852 reports, besides hundreds of letters from ordinary viewers, the committee says:
"Our own conclusion is that triviality is a natural vice of television, and that where it prevails it operates to lower general standards of enjoyment and understanding.
"It is, as we were reminded, 'more dangerous to the soul than wickedness'".
In their two years' study they found few complaints of the violence of old-fashioned Cowboys and Indian shows.
But the critics attacked the newer "sophisticated" Westerns - "which depict recognisable psychological problems in an atmosphere of violence and brutality".
Bluntly the report insists: "The argument that children are resilient and soon recover from the effects, whatever they may be, of the portrayal of violence in television, was rejected.
"From the representations put to us, this is the underlying cause of the disquiet about television - the belief, deeply felt, that the way television has portrayed human behaviour and treated moral issues has already done something and will, in time, do much to worsen the moral climate of the country.
"Many mass-appeal programmes were vapid and puerile, their content often derivative, repetitious and lacking in real substance. There was a vast amount of unworthy material".
This then is their summing-up of television in general: "We conclude that there is good cause for disquiet and dissatisfaction".
They also say that programmes do not properly meet the needs of Scotland and Wales and there should be more programmes of "a distinctly regional character" in England.

Family time

For the BBC there is plenty of applause. The corporation had told the committee that it had made a mistake in putting on "kitchen sink" plays on successive Sunday nights.
Comment from the report: "A sense of responsibility underlies the programming policies of the BBC. But many have alleged that the BBC has lowered its standards in order to compete with independent television.

[27] Again, no attempt is made to offer the Report's definition of 'triviality'.

"We are impressed with the BBC's awareness of the nature, the magnitude and the complexity of the task of catering for the needs of the public".
Praise, too, for the BBC's "all round professionalism".
"The BBC know good broadcasting; by and large they are providing it. The BBC are not blameless; but the causes are not we find to any great extent attributable to their service. We have no hesitation in saying that the BBC command public confidence".
Switching to the independent channels, the committee pours out a devastating indictment.
"For the ITA so greatly to discount the effect of the medium and hence the nature of their responsibilities seemed to us to be at variance with general opinion.

Cut prizes

"The working assumption must remain that television will be a considerable factor in influencing values and moral standards. The Authority's working assumption is that television has little effect. This is in our view a mistake."
In a typical week, between six and nine o'clock at night, independent T.V. screened two hours of Westerns and three hours of crime programmes.
The Pilkington panel lash out at the ITA for refusing to draw up a written code of violence.
"In a matter of such public concern, this amounts in our view to a surrender of authority."
They also attack the amount, treatment and timing of violence in ITV programmes.
Protests at big-money quiz shows and programmes "which ridiculed and humiliated ordinary people" also impressed the committee.
According to the critics, quiz shows - "a regularly repeated demonstration, in an atmosphere of synthetic excitement and artificial good fellowship, that large rewards were to be won for little effort" - had a bad moral effort, especially on young people.

Foolish

Jackpot winnings of as much as £1,000 are far too high, the committee complains. Instead of doubling-your-money it wants the prizes drastically slashed.
And clearly pointing the finger at shows like *Beat the Clock* in the Sunday Palladium programme, the committee says:
"One may, of course, make a fool of oneself among relatives or friends because one is then participating in an intimate and lively human relationship.
"To do so for the amusement of millions of others, who are both unseen and unknown, is to risk being merely a foolish spectacle".
ITV is blames for most of the current "dissatisfaction" with television.
Briefly the report sketches the brighter picture of the "impressive" success of independent television in providing a second service for the whole of Britain in ten years.
As an engineering achievement? "Praiseworthy" says the report. As a complex administrative structure? "Remarkable".
But as a product?
"The general judgement is unmistakable - it is that it falls well short of what a good public service of broadcasting should be".
In a 20-page spotlight on T.V. adverts, the reports warns that the social consequences are likely to be profound.
The *amount* of advertising is not so much that it detracts from the value of the programmes. But too many "natural breaks" are clearly - and badly - contrived.
This, says the committee, is the main criticism of adverts:
"That they too often imply that, unless one buys the equipment or the product advertised, one will have cause for shame, or loss of self-respect, or cannot hope for happiness.
"And that if one does buy these things, happiness, confidence, friends will accrue as a sort of free bonus.
"We conclude that advertisements which appeal to human weakness could well in the long run have a deplorable individual and social effect".
This is what the ITA is told to do:

Keep the maximum advertising time under review, and reduce it if possible.
Tighten up the practice of "natural breaks" so that they do not interfere with good broadcasting.
Ban all advertising magazines - mainly because the distinction between them and the programmes is "blurred".
Stop the showing of advertisements specially appealing to children during their hour of television. Impose tougher conditions on the use of children in advertisements.
Television news services get a special paragraph of praise.

Shake-up

"The country is well served by the national news bulletins of the BBC and ITN. The selection and presentation by both services is fair and objective.
"Each of the two services is good in itself, each is different from the other in style and approach.. Hence they offer the viewer a worthwhile choice, and stimulate one another.
Forceful representations were made to the committee by the Royal Society and the British Association on the "compelling need" to show the public the significance of science.
They put forward the idea of a scientist seconded to the senior production staff of the BBC. Others pleaded for programmes about architecture and town planning, presented in ways which would entertain and interest big audiences.
So the committee recommends that the BBC and ITA do more to cater for special tastes and interests.
"In an age of mass communications, it is important that the unusual - and even the apparently eccentric - should have room to exist".
In the most controversial recommendation of all, the report calls for a drastic shake-up of independent T.V.
Four major changes are put forward aimed at placing vast power in the hands of the ITA:
Under the Pilkington Plan the ITA would plan the programmes and buy them from the programme companies. It would take over the selling of advertising time. And the surplus advertising revenue would go to the Exchequer.
Here the committee comments that the programme companies' net receipts from advertising in 1961 were probably about £64,000,000.
Aim of their sensational changes would be, they say:

1. To vest the reality of power in the ITA.
2. To take away from programme planning and production the commercial incentive always to aim at maximum audiences and at maximum advertising revenue.
3. To apply the incentive of profitability to the production of the best programmes.
4. To promote real competition in production between the programme contractors

Slot T.V.

In advance the committee rejects any idea that this would be putting programme planning into the hands of the bureaucrats.
Would it make independent T.V. into another BBC? "That", says the report, "would be a complete misconception".
Programme companies would not lose their individual character and enterprise. Many would still be associated with particular areas.
"They would still be engaged in profitable business. Moreover they would be competing with each other, and the size of their profits would depend on the quality of the programmes they produced".
The BBC should get the go-ahead to operate the new T.V. channel as soon as possible. But any new service should be barred to independent T.V. "so long as it is constituted and organized as at present".
The report adds scathingly: "The effect of allocating to it a second programme would be to aggravate the faults and the deficiencies".
But the carrot of a second television programme is dangled before independent T.V. - if the Pilkington reforms are carried out.
And the committee recommends a five-year period of "probation" in which independent T.V. "could prove its capacity to realise the purposes of broadcasting".
So that there can be no mistake the rule is underlined: "The BBC should remain the main instrument of broadcasting in the United Kingdom".

And "Where it is possible, at royal and State occasions, for only one camera team to be present the BBC should have the right and the duty of undertaking the broadcast".
It turns down coin-in-the-slot T.V. and rejects outright the idea of commercial local radio stations paid for by advertisements.
Instead, the BBC should provide local sound broadcasting, planned to serve the largest possible number of distinctive communities.
A new BBC T.V. channel, local sound broadcasts, colour T.V. and a change to the 625-line standard - how would the corporation pay for all this?
The report suggests: Put up the licence fee to £6. Which is, they point out, less than 4d. per day per household - "remarkably little".
The committee recommends that where a Press interest in a T.V. company is dominant - as in Scottish Television - the contract should lapse on its expiry in 1964 - unless the Press interest had been sufficiently reduced.

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